

BLURRING NEWS AND FICTION

Daniel Day-Lewis, bombs, violence and cinema

THE EYE



END OF ANOTHER UNION

How De Klerk abandoned apartheid and his wife

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JUNK MAIL IS GOOD FOR YOU

Hamish McRae defends a boost for democracy

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THE INDEPENDENT

Wednesday 18 February 1998 45p No 3,537

Tax breaks for working mothers: our campaign begins

By Glenda Cooper
Social Affairs Correspondent

TODAY *The Independent* is calling on Gordon Brown to make a genuine investment in the nation's children in next month's Budget by helping their parents to afford high-quality childcare.

The Chancellor has already signalled that he will make some improvements to government provision for childcare, mainly for lone parents, but it does not go far enough. We argue that a childcare tax allowance of £1,800 a year would

improve the lives of many working mothers and encourage others back to work.

Affordable and quality childcare is the main barrier preventing women from going back to work. Nearly a third of mothers have said they are discouraged from returning to work after childbirth because of its expense.

The Government has emphasised the importance of setting the right priorities in tax and spending, and will publish a comprehensive review later this year. Yet we give tax relief to drivers who use their car for

work, a tax allowance to married couples and the "bricks and mortar" subsidy of mortgage interest tax relief.

But there is almost no help for parents who have, on average, to pay £6,000 a year out of

after-tax income for childcare – more than they spend on housing or food. The allowance we propose would cost the Government less than the tax sub-

sidy to homebuyers. There is less state help with childcare costs in Britain than almost any other leading economy. The main help is through family credit, available to very few families.

While in France local authorities and employers share costs and in Sweden public funds supply the main source of money, in the UK more than 90 per cent of formal child care is paid for by parents themselves.

As a result, lone mothers in the UK have one of the lowest employment rates in Europe. While 41 per cent are employed in Britain, double that

percentage are in work in France. In the Budget, the Chancellor is expected to make the childcare element of Family Credit more generous, and available to more families. This will lower a significant barrier to work for many women, especially single mothers.

But we believe targeting childcare help at only the very low-paid ignores the same cost for millions of others. While the need is greater for the least well-off, there is an overwhelming case for additional government support for childcare.

"Parents are ready and will-

ing to work but often cannot because they can't afford childcare," says Colette Kelleher, director of the Daycare Trust.

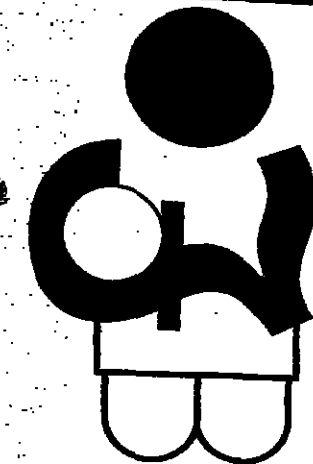
With women expected to account for 1.1 million of the increase of 1.5 million in the labour force by 2006, the issue will become even more pressing. Add your support to our campaign. Write to Glenda Cooper, *The Independent*, One Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 1DL or fax us on 0171 293 2143 or e-mail coop@independent.co.uk

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Leading article, page 18

A challenge to Mr Brown

Without working women, many of them mothers, the world economy would collapse. A increasing slice of global household income depends on women's efforts outside the home. In most Western countries, "family" means an incessant struggle to balance work, home and children, in which most of the burden – still, whatever the alleged changes in men's role and sensibilities – falls on women. It is time that this was recognised by the Government and acted upon.

Leading article page 18



First cracks in anti-Iraq alliance

By Anthony Bevins
and Fran Abrams

A RIFT between Robin Cook and the Foreign Office over Iraq yesterday exposed deep problems between Britain and the United States over the authority for air strikes.

Mr Cook told the Commons that military action would require United Nations approval. But that clashed directly with the line from Washington. Downing Street and even his own department – all of which were more gung-ho.

Because Saddam Hussein is already in breach of the UN Gulf War ceasefire resolution, requiring the dismantling of his weapons of mass destruction, the Washington view is that no further UN blessing is needed for military strikes.

Opening the first Commons debate on the crisis, Mr Cook told Tony Benn – a leading Labour opponent of military action – that it would be "prudent" to get a further UN resolution. The Foreign Secretary then told Michael Colvin, a Conservative MP, that existing UN resolutions "give rise to a logical interpretation" that force was already authorised.

"Having said that," Mr Cook added, "our own view is very strong, that there should be a further Security Council resolution to demonstrate to Saddam and to the rest of the world that any action that is taken by the United States and the United Kingdom is action that has the support of an interna-

tional consensus." While the Foreign Secretary was saying a resolution of the UN Security Council was required – a legal view backed by Lord Mayhew, Tory Attorney-General during the 1991 conflict, in a parallel Lords debate – an official Foreign Office spokesman told *The Independent* yesterday that a resolution would be "desirable". He repeatedly refused to take the opportunity to back the Foreign Secretary's line – saying he would not "unsay" what Mr Cook had told the House.

The *Independent* has been told by a senior government source that while Mr Cook wants President Saddam to back down, and he recognises the value of a military reinforcement for diplomatic negotiation, he is more reluctant than his own department, the Prime Minister and President Clinton to resort to air strikes – which are most unlikely to win Security Council backing.

Agreeing that there was a difference between Mr Cook's position and the view from Washington, the Prime Minister's spokesman said yesterday that while Britain stood "shoulder-to-shoulder with the United States... there is a difference of interpretation, possibly."

In his Commons speech, Mr Cook also warned that in the remote event of an Iraqi chemical or biological attack on Britain, "there would be a proportionate response". However, he told MPs only last week that there was no question of a nuclear strike against Iraq.

The Government faced repeated protests from the Labour benches during last night's debate. Fourteen Labour MPs put their names to an amendment calling for sanctions to be lifted and for no military action without Security Council support.

The Labour rebels were led by Mr Benn, a former Cabinet Minister, and Tam Dalyell, MP for Linlithgow. Mr Benn said the Government was asking MPs to share responsibility for action which it knew would be taken without the authority of the UN Security Council.

He told Mr Cook that the Russians and Chinese would not vote for the use of force. "So why involve the House of Commons in an act that would run contrary to what the Security Council would do?"

It was now inevitable that there would be another war in the Gulf, he added. "That huge fleet is not in the Gulf waiting to be withdrawn when Saddam gives a friendly noise to Kofi Annan [the UN Secretary-General]..."

Backing the Government in a rare Commons intervention, John Major, who was Prime Minister at the time of the Gulf War, asked: "What would this House say to itself and say to history if we knew that now we had an opportunity to take action and we chose not to? I don't suggest this is an easy option. The Government have no easy option here, and they deserve our support for the decisions they have to take."

Question of War, page 12



Cricket heroes: Dean Headley (left), Angus Fraser and Mark Butcher celebrate yesterday. Full report, page 28 Photograph: Laurence Griffiths/Allsport

Rise in breast cancer linked to women drinking more

By Jeremy Laurence
Health Editor

An increase in women's drinking may account for the rapid rise in breast cancer which has claimed 300,000 lives in the last 20 years, researchers said yesterday.

A review of six studies shows that women who have between two and a half and six alcoholic drinks a day increase their risk of breast cancer by over 40 per cent. A drink is counted as half a pint of beer, a glass of wine or a tot of spirits. The finding is in line with previous research.

However, doctors say moderate drinking is still good for most women because it cuts the

risk of heart disease. Women are 10 times more likely to die of heart disease than breast cancer in old age, and over twice as likely in middle age, so the protective effect of alcohol on the heart is more important for most women than its damaging effect on the breast.

The latest review of the link between alcohol and breast cancer, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, examined six studies in Canada, the Netherlands, Sweden and the US. The total of 322,000 women were monitored for 11 years, and 4,300 developed the disease.

Breast cancer deaths in Britain rose by 20 per cent between the 1960s and the late

1980s to 16,000 a year, one of the highest rates in the world.

Professor Richard Peto, a cancer epidemiologist at Oxford University, said: "There is no doubt that alcohol does increase the risk of breast cancer developing and it must be partly responsible for the rise in deaths from the 1960s to the 1980s. The question is what is the net effect of moderate drinking [after taking account of its effect on heart disease]? In old age it is massively favourable and in middle age it is probably moderately favourable."

Since the late 1980s, breast cancer deaths have fallen sharply, to around 14,000 a year, chiefly as a result of the hormonal drug Tamoxifen.

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Award for women war reporters

THE *INDEPENDENT* and *The Independent on Sunday* are to launch the Martha Gellhorn award for women war reporters, in memory of the celebrated journalist who died at the weekend, aged 89. Miss Gellhorn began her career as a war reporter during the Spanish Civil War and continued reporting the horrors from the frontlines of many of this century's bloodiest conflicts, including the Second World War, the Middle East and Vietnam.

The award, which is open to women covering wars for British publications, will commemorate Miss Gellhorn's passion and objectivity. Her own words set the standard for the prize: the journalist's duty, she said, was to "limit yourself to what you see or hear, and not suppress or invent"; nor could she abide "all that objectivity shit". War reporting, for her, was about writing which evokes the plight of the victim of war and the ordinary soldier, not the general or the politician, back home in a smoke-filled room. Further details of the award will be published soon in *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday*.

Real Olympians do it with a CD wrapper

By Paul McCann
Media Correspondent

PEELING the fiddly shrink-wrap from the CD cover, trying to park a car in a tight space – this is the "real" Olympics.

Last night, on US television, while sports fans – not enough, according to the ratings – tuned into the Nagano Winter Olympics, on the other side two comedy producers presented their proposal for a sporting fest more in keeping with ordinary people's lives.

While purists are gnashing their teeth over plans to include

ballroom dancing and snooker in the Olympics, the duo introduced "The Disk", a race to remove a CD wrapper and "Tab and Tip", a contest to share out a restaurant bill based on six people all eating different items and leaving a tip.

"The 1998 all-games" was held in a Brooklyn street and had its own mascot, lanky the Giant Rat. The competition was tailor-made for New York, but future gold medalists in at least one event must surely come from the crowded streets of Britain. The "Parallel Parking Pairs" involved couples racing to

squeeze their cars into a tight space between two alarmed cars. Not only had each couple to try to park first without setting off the alarms, but presumably they had to do so without the non-driving partner getting a snack in the mouth for giving unwanted advice.

CBS television paid millions for the Nagano games – getting the lowest ratings for any Olympic event since 1968. Americans are voting with their remote controls; hence the need to offer something more in touch with ordinary people than snow-clad mountains and

Lyra-clad skiers. "We want to celebrate the Olympian in all of us," said Tad Lowe, creator of the all-games for United Paramount network. "The Winter Olympics are no longer relevant to our everyday lives. Look at the biathlon. Have you ever met a guy on skis with a shotgun on his back in your normal life?"



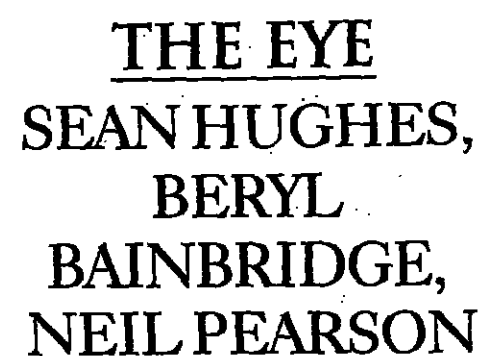
Report boost for cannabis

Regal departure: The Queen Mother leaving King Edward VII Hospital in central London yesterday three weeks after an operation to replace her left hip. Photograph: Andrew Buiman

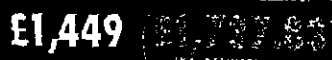
A leading scientific magazine is expected tomorrow to publish further research which indicates that cannabis has fewer health effects than other legal drugs such as tobacco.

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Row over benefit for young musicians

By Fran Abrams

BUDDING musicians' right to draw benefit while living in bedsits and playing hopeless gigs in half-empty pubs was at the centre of a political row last night.

Andrew Smith, the employment minister, was rebuffed after inviting the director of Creation Records to discuss the finer points of musical development and the drop-out culture over a coffee. Alan McGee, who had been complaining that Welfare to Work would stifle creativity, replied that he would not be prepared to take part in such a "sop to the media" unless his demands for leniency towards the nation's youth were met.

Mr McGee, who is a member of the Government's Creative Industries Task Force, was not impressed by Mr Smith's approach.

"I am not to put too fine a point on it, pleased off with what I consider to be this ill-judged, unfair and draconian Welfare initiative. I urge the Government to take a long, hard look at the issue again and to find... fairly paid jobs without penalising the lifeblood of our cultural future," he said in a statement. Furthermore, he would only meet Mr Smith if he was prepared to tell him "exactly how musicians are not going to be forced into jobs that they don't want to do".

Both Mr McGee and Wayne Hemmingsway, founder of the Red or Dead fashion company, have recently criticised the Blair administration's lack of support for youth culture. Earlier this week, Mr Hemmingsway backed Mr McGee, saying in a radio interview that budding young musicians should be allowed to continue the tradition of developing their creativity while claiming benefit, because the nation would eventually be rewarded with export earnings when they became successful.

Mr Smith claimed he had the answers, though. Future Sid Vicious and Billy Idols would do just as well on a Government training programme, he suggested.

In fact, the New Deal had already helped one young man to find an agent and a singer to front his band. It had also sent him to the Business Education Centre "for further advice and assistance on self-employment."

Mr Smith said modern youngsters welcomed the help. The music industry was increasingly high-tech and there was far more to it than sitting around strumming a guitar. A group of young people who met the Prime Minister in Sheffield earlier this month were now on courses at the Darnall Music Centre, where they were learning about programming and sampling.



Jarvis Cocker and (below) Liam Gallagher both depended on benefits on their way to rock stardom

Dole-queue blues that gave Britpop its soul

By David Lister
Arts News Editor

Britpop certainly began as Dolepop. Many of the songs that have epitomised the most creative period in rock music for over 20 years were written or worked on by musicians out of work and usually claiming benefit.

Oasis, Pulp and the Verve, three of the biggest-selling bands, whose albums and singles have won both critical and popular acclaim, created songs that were to become anthems before they landed a proper job. Jarvis Cocker, lead singer and songwriter with Pulp, only signed off in 1993, even though he had been gigging and recording for some years.

Liam Gallagher of Oasis was on social security for years before hitting the big time, as were other members of the band. Liam went to a Restart interview and told the DSS official he wanted to be a rock star. When the official told him that was not possible, he said he would settle for a lumberjack instead, before terminating the conversa-

tion. His songwriter brother Noel was in work. But his songs, which appeared on Oasis's first album *Definitely Maybe* were worked on and rehearsed while the rest of the band were on the dole.

The Verve's songwriter and frontman Richard Ashcroft spent two years, 1995 and 1996, drifting and writing songs. Those songs were later to appear on their Brit Award-winning album *Urban Hymns*. And two of them, "The Drugs Don't Work" and "Bitter Sweet Symphony" were huge hits as singles. "Richard needed that exodus period," a spokesman for the band said yesterday. "He was able to concentrate on writing the songs."

Portishead, the former Brit Award winners, actually met up on a back-to-work scheme. Chumbawamba - John Prescott's least favourite band and now also Brit Award winners - also wrote songs while on the dole. Pete Dinklage, lead singer of Three Colours Red, signed to Alan McGee's Creation label, who was on the dole for five years, says of the Government's new scheme: "It's going to make it impossible

to live, let alone be in a band. I guess I was lucky."

Five years on the dole is far from being a record. Mark Ashton, lead singer of the band Addict, which signed to the record company V2 last year for £100,000, was on the dole for eight years. He said recently: "It was vital for me - for us - to have that facility so we could put 100 per cent into our music." Most art forms, of course, have a close association with benefit. Actors often suffer periods of unemployment just before striking stardom and have protested about plans to tighten up on them being allowed to claim benefits while "resting".

But rock has its own DSS hall of fame. Mick Hucknall, the lead singer of Simply Red, is another superstar and New Labour supporter who collected dole money while learning his craft. But if proof were needed that some of the biggest names in music start on the dole, it is that one of the biggest selling bands of the Eighties named themselves in homage to a piece of paper they knew well - the unemployment benefit claim form, UB40.

Howard's son is accused of 'spiritual Nazism'

By Clare Garner

Nick Howard, son of Michael Howard, the shadow Foreign Secretary, has been accused of "spiritual Nazism" because of his support of efforts to introduce Jewish undergraduates at Oxford University to Christianity.

Nick Howard, 21, who was raised as a Jew but became an evangelical Christian at the age of 15, recently helped organise a university Christian Union meeting which expressly targeted Jews. Union members were urged to bring along their Jewish friends, and kosher food was served.

Mr Howard junior - whose father is a practising member of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in St John's Wood, north London - explained his mission: "As Christians it is our duty to reach Jews, who are the priority in our evangelism. It is a process of reasoning, persuading them to become Christians. Christianity is fulfilled Judaism."

Rabbi Shmuley Boteach, executive director of the D'Chaim Society, a Jewish-based organisation, was so incensed by the young man's proselytising activities that he challenged him to a public debate. The motion "Was Jesus the Jewish Messiah? Is it right that young Jews away from home should be specifically targeted by 'spiritual Nazis' as prime candidates for Christianity?" will be debated in Oxford tonight.

Rabbi Boteach said: "I thought we were in the age of mutual understanding and respect, not the age of spiritual Nazism whereby one faith is promoted as being superior to another or where the adherents of an ancient people are targeted for conversion by small-minded bigotry."

A memo circulated by the Christian Union after its evangelical meeting congratulated members on the number of Jews who attended. Of the 57 students present, about half were Jewish. The memo stated: "Jewish undergraduates formed a good share - and so our aim of spreading the gospel to this community is being brought to fruition... The Jews there heard that Jesus is their Messiah, the suffering servant, high priest and ruling king, who alone can bring them to the Faith."



At odds: Nick Howard (above) and Rabbi Shmuley Boteach



Mr Howard junior, a third-year English literature undergraduate at St Catherine's college, Oxford, hit the headlines in 1995 when an article he had written for the *Evening Standard* explaining why he could not vote for Tony Blair was accidentally printed under the name of Bryan Gould, the former Labour shadow cabinet member.

Raised as a Jew, he turned to Christianity at Eton. He was baptised at a Christian summer camp and now describes himself as: "A Jewish believer in Jesus". He explained: "Jesus himself was Jewish and all of the first Christians were Jewish." He added that he feels "much more Jewish" now that he has found Jesus. Asked whether he now observed Jewish rites, he said: "That's a tricky one. Yes, I've been along to the synagogue since becoming a Christian and we've had Passover together."

Of his latest evangelical mission, he said: "I wonder what my grandmother is going to say. She's Jewish. She will probably be very hurt."

Shipwreck ends couple's round-the-world dream

By Stephen Goodwin

A British couple, plucked from a storm-lashed rock after being shipwrecked in the Southern Ocean, were yesterday struggling to come to terms with the consequences of their ordeal - lucky to be alive but a dream of sailing round the world shattered.

"Everything we have had for the past two-and-a-half years is now at the bottom of the ocean," said Doreen Cheek, recovering in Hobart, Tasmania. "All our photographs, clothes, gifts for our family - everything. It's all just gone forever."

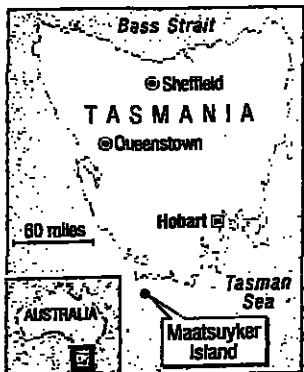
A few hours earlier material considerations were not a priority. Peter and Doreen Cheek's 39-foot yacht *Talis II* was being battered by 100 mph winds and huge waves against rocks off Maatsuyker Island, 18 miles south of Tasmania.

Half way through a five-year round-the-world voyage, the couple, from the Isle of Wight, had anchored off the main island intending to go ashore and film sea lions and seals. But the wind changed and started to blow on shore, dragging the yacht's two anchors across the sea-bed.

It was dark, and by the time the Cheeks realised their predicament their 20-year old sloop was against the rocks.

"We knew that was the end of the yacht because of this great rock we were just humping up on and rolling from side to side. I expected the boat to just cave in," Mr Cheek, 62, told BBC Radio Five Live.

The couple grabbed some



belongings and scrambled into a dinghy, but it was crushed between the yacht and the rock.

"We both went under and came up. I grabbed hold of some kelp and pulled myself up on to the rocks and my wife hung on to my foot. I managed to pull her up as well and

we got out." But the ordeal for Mr Cheek and his 58-year-old wife was not over. They were stranded in atrocious conditions on a rock off a barren island, noted as the home off Australia's most southerly lighthouse.

In the haste of abandoning the yacht there was time only to broadcast one brief mayday message and they feared that might have been mistaken for a joke. "We were scared no one would turn up looking for us," said Mr Cheek. "We thought we might have to end up eating seal meat."

But, luckily another yacht sheltering from the storm picked up the message and an rescue was launched. An aircraft sent from Hobart was unable to spot the couple so a long-range helicopter was set

off from Sale on the Australian mainland. The Cheeks were eventually sighted by the lighthouse keeper. Huddled on their rock, cut off by 25 feet of deep, rough water, they had pulled grass over themselves to keep warm.

Ten hours after sending their mayday plea, the couple were lifted off by a helicopter winchman in conditions described by pilot Jim Llewellyn as the worst he had experienced for a rescue in 23 years. David Gray, of the Australian Search and Rescue Service, said the Cheeks were lucky to be alive. "No one goes down there. It's very, very wild."

The couple were flown to hospital in Hobart suffering from mild hypothermia.

Mr Cheek said: "We have worked so long and so hard on this project. It was not so much frightening, it's just so disappointing to have let this sort of thing happen."

All that was left yesterday of their dream and the yacht Mr Cheek had worked on outside their home in East Cowes was a mast poking above the waves of a lovely ocean. They are now intending to return home to the Isle of Wight.

Mr and Mrs Cheek are experienced ocean sailors and also lucky ones. In 1979, during the same storm that took lives of leading yachtsmen in the Fastnet Race, Mrs Cheek was swept off the deck of *Talis II* and only survived by grabbing a rope trailing overboard.

"The gods seem to be on their side," their 34-year-old daughter Sue said yesterday.



Lucky to be alive: Peter and Doreen Cheek, recovering from their ordeal in Hobart yesterday Photograph: Reuters

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Child abuser got £28m in care fees

By Roger Dobson

A former hotel worker who was subsequently jailed for child abuse, was paid £28m over a period of 13 years by local authorities to look after children in care.

In one year, John Allen, who once had an office in Harley Street, drew an income of more than £200,000 from the Bryn Alyn community homes in north Wales. His company also made a profit approaching £400,000 and he ran up a director's overdraft of nearly £500,000, the North Wales child abuse tribunal was told yesterday.

The Alyn empire prospered between

1968 and 1990 despite a police investigation into an allegation of abuse in 1970, two decades before Allen was jailed for six years for indecent assault.

Allen, 56, yesterday denied that he had given more than £100,000 worth of cash and presents to residents and former residents of homes to either keep them quiet or to enable him to exploit them for his own gratification. In one case, a former resident was paid nearly £25,000, Gerard Elias QC told the tribunal, and others were given gifts of motorbikes and hi-fi music systems.

The tribunal was told that former residents had written to Allen seeking money with in

some cases veiled threats. Allen admitted that one attempt had been made to blackmail him.

The tribunal - at Caernarfon Crown Court - was told that Allen had paid for a flat in Brighton for a former resident. Three people who had been in care in various parts of north Wales were among five people who died in a fire in Brighton at another property six years ago.

The Bryn Alyn empire started in 1968 when Allen acquired his first home. In subsequent years, it expanded until at one time it had 200 children and he was dealing with 38 different councils. He also had properties in London and Gloucester, and a holiday

home in France which some of the boys would visit.

But while the business boomed - it had a turnover of £2.6m in one year - children were being abused, and in 1995 Allen was jailed for six years after being found guilty of indecent assaults on boys.

Giving evidence to the tribunal yesterday, Allen claimed that the allegations against him had been made up and that the former residents who had complaints were liars.

"You ran Bryn Alyn to exploit children for your own gratification, and to be paid substantial funds. The gifts were given so you could exploit children," Mr Elias, counsel for

the tribunal, said. He said Allen had placed a former resident in a flat in Brighton as another sexual contact to be exploited.

Timothy King QC, who represents a number of alleged victims of abuse, told how one boy had written to Allen after the former owner of Bryn Alyn had been arrested.

"He wanted to be assured that what had happened to him was all right. He said you had to reassure him that the things you did to him were all right. That was how you worked, wasn't it? You infiltrated through kindness, you made them your favourites, and then you abused them."

The hearing continues.

Lesbian rail worker loses sex-bias case

By Katherine Butler
in Brussels

GAY RIGHTS campaigners suffered a major legal setback yesterday when the European Court rejected a lesbian couple's claim for equal rights in the workplace.

Railway worker Lisa Grant and her partner Jill Percy who travelled to Luxembourg anticipating a landmark victory for gay couples, left after the 15-minute sitting, defeated and deeply despondent.

But the ruling which the women described as "scandalous" came as an immense relief to the Government and employers. A decision in the couple's favour would have had huge ramifications for employment law, pensions and social security contributions. It would in effect have paved the way for equal recognition for gay couples under employment law.

Ms Grant brought her employer, South West Trains Ltd, to an industrial tribunal in Southampton after the company refused to extend travel rights to Ms Percy, her live-in partner. Such concessions are automatically granted to the spouses or opposite sex partners of company workers and Ms Grant's male predecessor had been given travel perks for his female partner even though he was not married to her.

But the Luxembourg court, asked by the tribunal for an interpretation of EU law in the matter, said that the case did not involve sex discrimination, which is outlawed by the EU treaty. Rather it involved discrimination on the grounds of sexual orientation, which is not.

Cherie Booth QC, who represented Ms Grant when the

case was heard last year, argued that the train company's policy of denying travel passes to the partner in a same-sex couple was in breach of the equal pay principle enshrined in Article 119 of the EU treaty.

Travel benefits, considered part of the pay package, are granted to a man living with a woman but not a woman living with a man. The denial of £1000-worth of annual tickets on the basis of Ms Grant's partner's sex was therefore a violation of the equal pay principle, Ms Booth said.

But the court found that the company's policy would also deny travel passes to a man living with one of its male employees. "The rule could not therefore be taken as discrimination based directly on sex, since it applies in the same way to female and male workers," the court said. The ban on sex discrimination was interpreted to require equal treatment for men and women but could not be stretched beyond that.

The ruling will affect the outcome of other cases. Terry Perkins, sacked from the Navy in 1995 for being gay, is waiting for a date for the hearing of his case by the European Court in Luxembourg, but now may stand little chance of success.

One glimmer of hope for homosexuals rests in the judges' reference to the new Amsterdam Treaty which is being ratified and will eventually replace the current treaty. It contains an anti-discrimination clause which covers sexual orientation. But its weakness, as far as campaigners are concerned, is that it confers no direct rights on individuals. New EU legislation would have to be enacted to do this.



Fowl plot: Pickets near the home of the executive at the centre of the dispute over the dismissal of Magnet Kitchens staff Photograph: Tom Pileton

Miners flock to the aid of their old kitchen comrades

By Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

The well-heeled villagers of Croxton, rural Cambridgeshire, have never seen anything like it. First came a rag-tag platoon of retired miners from north Derbyshire who set up camp outside the rolling acres of Croxton Park Estate. Then came the security staff, in paramilitary-style boiler suits, who patrolled the perimeter of the ground, stopping occasionally to film the erstwhile activities of the picket.

The ex-miners were there to show solidarity with 350 strikers at Magnet Kitchens' Facto-

ry in deepest industrial Darlington. The security men were to protect the interests of Alan Bowkett, who lives in Georgian splendour in the parklands and who is chief executive of Berisford, the company which owns the plant in Darlington.

Yesterday the former colliers turned up with a flock of chickens, claiming they were to set up a farm not far from the estate. The ex-miners had been threatened with legal action for allegedly establishing an unlawful secondary picket line outside Mr Bowkett's property.

They were also told they may be in breach of "stalking" laws, passed largely to prevent de-

ranked men pursuing frightened women. So the unionists searched for land near Croxton to establish a chicken farm which, they contend, was perfectly legal. Mysteriously, they were about to complete a purchase, until they found a landowner prepared to rent out a field. While they erected placards outside the field claiming Mr Bowkett's "Chickens Had Come To Roost", pickets from the Magnet plant distributed leaflets in the village.

Under the headline "Magnet Kitchen A Company of Shame", the pickets explained the goings-on to the villagers.

After a three-year pay freeze the workers asked for a 3-per-cent rise, which the company awarded to 200 employees but offered nothing to the other 150. The workers walked out and after 12 days all 350 were dismissed. That was 17 months ago, since when the Darlington factory has been picketed constantly.

The former workers were incensed by a £125,000 pay increase received by Mr Bowkett, already on £321,620. They say it would have cost £114,000 a year to settle the dispute. The company recently offered £300,000 to the dismissed workers for retraining. Union leaders denounced it as derisory.

Terry Butkeraitis, former vice-president of the National Union of Mineworkers in Derbyshire and one of the aspiring chicken farmers, said he and his colleagues would stick by the Magnet workers for as long as it took. "They helped us during the miners' strike with food and clothes, so we are repaying a debt of honour."

The Darlington men expressed disappointment with the Labour government and in particular Tony Blair, whose Sedgefield home is seven miles from the Magnet plant. Mr Bowkett yesterday argued that the dispute arose largely from inter-union rivalry.

U-turn on greenbelt

THE Government did a U-turn yesterday in an attempt to dampen criticism of its environment policies before John Prescott's statement on house building on green-belt land.

The minister for the regions, Dick Caborn, told MPs that he was withdrawing proposals in the Regional Development Agencies Bill, which give regional development agencies compulsory purchase powers, for a re-think.

The concession was aimed at reducing tensions over the threat to the green-belt before the statement by the Deputy Prime Minister to the Commons next Monday on the Government's long term plans for housing in Britain.

Dog to die

A TERMINALLY-ILL dog seems destined to die in a police kennel after a magistrate refused to let it spend its final days with its owner.

Judd, a mastiff-terrier cross, was seized by police on Hampstead Heath in 1991, just two days before he was due to be registered under the Dangerous Dogs Act. His owner, Gary Dume, said he was devastated by yesterday's decision.

Kenya arrests

FIVE men are being questioned by police in Kenya over the murder of Roy Chivers who was stabbed and robbed while on holiday with his wife.

They were arrested in a dragnet of the area around Aberdare Country Club in Nyeri where Mr Chivers, a retired officer with the Metropolitan police, was attacked on Sunday.

Car tax plea

GREEN campaigners are calling for Labour ministers to honour their pre-election pledges to penalise the owners of gas-guzzling cars. At present, drivers in Britain pay £150 a year regardless of the fuel efficiency of their vehicle.

Charles Secrett, executive director of FoE, claimed the "flat road tax is a gift to greedy gas guzzlers".

Soldier's £1.7m

PRIVATE Iain Roy, 26, paralysed in an army exercise, has settled for more than £1.7m compensation, one of the largest such awards by the Ministry of Defence.

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As 'The Independent' launches its campaign for tax subsidy on childcare, Diane Coyle considers the costs involved while Glenda Cooper looks at the present arrangements and what they mean for a lone parent who wants to work

Childcare: a question of national priorities

ANALYSIS

Which of the following uses of government money would most people in Britain regard as more valuable? Tax relief for drivers who use their car for work? An annual subsidy to farmers who grow arable crops like wheat and oilseed rape? The yearly cost of "policy and management" at the Ministry of Defence? The "bricks and mortar" subsidy of mortgage interest tax relief? Or government help for childcare?

Although few would quarrel with the idea that an investment in the nation's children ought to be an important priority, the truth is that it is not reflected in government policy. Even though the Government has announced that it will introduce a National Childcare Strategy, it has not, yet, put the muscle of real money behind it.

For evidence about its priorities, compare the Welfare to Work spending on after-school childcare, intended to help lone parents (mainly women) return to work, with the New Deal spending on young people unemployed for more than six months (mainly men). The figures are £300m and £3.2bn respectively. The financing speaks the real language of priorities.

Parents pay a higher proportion of the cost of childcare in Britain than virtually every other advanced economy, meeting 93 per cent of the cost.

According to the Daycare Trust, the childcare campaigners, the typical annual bill for a family with two children, one at school, is £6,000. This amounts to nearly a fifth of gross income for a two-job couple each on national average earnings – half as much again as the same family would spend on food.

The Treasury has signalled that Gordon Brown will take one significant and welcome step in his Budget on 17 March. He will make the current childcare element of Family Credit far more generous, and available to many more families, when the replacement working families tax credit is introduced.

If the new childcare credit for those on low-incomes is indeed as generous as the hints from those close to the Chancellor indicate, it will lower a significant barrier to work for many women, especially single mothers. Lone mothers in the UK have amongst the lowest rates of employment compared to other countries because of what the Institute for Fiscal Studies has described as "the

significant work disincentive costs of childcare in the UK".

But assistance for childcare targeted only on the very low-paid ignores the same cost for millions of other women. They might earn somewhat more; but even for those on close to average earnings, paying for childcare makes the decision to go out to work touch-and-go financially for the second earner in the family.

The need is certainly greater for the least well-off, but there is an overwhelming case for additional government support for childcare – especially when compared with the other uses to which government money is put.

A basic-rate tax allowance of around £1,800 a year, similar to the married couples' allowance, and made available to one parent in a family using paid registered childcare, would cost the Exchequer £1bn-£2bn a year.

This would compare with the expected cost of the crops subsidy of £1.3bn; the £1bn a year subsidy to business drivers; the £2.7bn cost of mortgage interest tax relief; and the £1.7bn the MoD spends on policy in a year.

If the Government did not want to divert money from these priorities, it could chivy departments into selling off some of the surplus assets like car parks and empty buildings identified last November in the National Asset Register. Despite the fanfare that greeted the 1990s "Domesday Book", no wasted assets have yet made it to market.

Some campaigners favour different schemes such as direct subsidies to childcare providers or low-cost loans to parents.

But the advantage of a tax allowance is two-fold: it is administratively simple and it creates a direct incentive for women to work. It would potentially make available to employers the skills and effort of some of the 2 million-plus women with dependent children who do not work.

Some economists would argue that it has the disadvantage of simply giving money to parents who are already at work and paying for childcare. True, but this overlooks the fact that the mere fact of having children imposes a huge financial penalty on women, reducing their lifetime earnings by tens of thousands of pounds. If the Government is as family-friendly as it claims, a new childcare allowance would signal that it recognises the value this financial sacrifice contributes to the economy as a whole.



Daily grind: Emma-Lyndsey Allan with her mother Lorna in their one-bedroom flat. Childcare costs mean there is little cash left for luxuries

Photograph: Nicola Kurtz

‘I voted Tony Blair in because I thought he was interested in this. You have to laugh now’

THE FAMILY

LORNA ALLAN has done exactly what the Government wants. A single parent determined not to sponge off the state, she went back to work when her baby was 12 weeks old “even though it broke my

heart”. She now finds herself in an intolerable situation.

To work full time, as she does at the North Middlesex Hospital, she pays a third of her net income to the childminder. With such a large chunk gone she has abandoned all thoughts of luxuries such as holidays

and struggles to pay her rent for the small studio flat she and the baby live in.

“At the back of my mind there’s always the fear of debt. I dread the electricity bill because I know I just don’t have the money. And children at this age just grow so quickly, they’re

out of clothes in a moment,” she said.

“Single mothers have this stigma attached to them. There’s all this thing about getting back into work but they do nothing to help parents really, single or otherwise. I’m saving the Government money be-

cause I’m paying someone else to look after my child. In effect I’m employing someone so they get off the statistics as well.

“The last childminder I had, she had four or five children. I had paid my tax and national insurance, gave her cash that she then had to pay tax and NI on.

The Government is laughing all the way to the bank.

“I have to take holiday entitlement to nurse my baby when she’s sick. So if I’m likely to say to the minder, ‘I’m thinking of taking some holiday’, what I really mean is I need a rest from work and my holiday will be in Costa del Edmonton. I can’t have any luxuries.”

She added: “If they just gave us a little bit of help it would be nice. If you have a company you can put in tax returns and say this is an expense. I have to find more than £4,000 a year after I’ve paid my tax.

“I voted Tony Blair in because I thought he was interested in this. You have to laugh now. They’re talking about parents going back to work and having to get off benefit. I’m not entitled to anything. Yet how are they going to achieve this without childcare?”

“I don’t want to be on benefits. I don’t want charity. But I think one day in the future I’m going to have to pack it all in, go back to Scotland. I don’t want to be a burden on my parents and the state but I just can’t afford this life.”

Parents struggle with cost and lack of places

THE COSTS

ALMOST all childcare in the UK is private. More than 90 per cent of the costs of registered childcare places in the UK are met by parents themselves – around £2.6bn per year. It is more expensive than anywhere else in Europe, the Daycare Trust estimates.

Yet there remains a shortage of childcare places. There are nearly 6 million children under the age of eight in Britain but less than 700,000 registered childcare places –

there is only one childcare place for every nine children under eight.

The biggest service by far is provided by childminders with 425,027 registered places, compared with 187,123 day nurseries and 56,322 after-school clubs.

The Chancellor in the last budget indicated that £300m would be put aside for out-of-school care to create 30,000 additional after-school clubs for 1 million children.

Parents with one pre-school child and one child at school typically face childcare bills of

around £6,000 per annum – nearly double what they spend on food or housing. While an out-of-school club costs £15 to £30 a week, a childminder costs £80 to £120 per full-time place, a private nursery £70 to £180 and a nanny anything between £80 and £260.

It is unsurprising then that many women turn to ad hoc means of childcare such as friends or partners. It is estimated 45 per cent of working mothers use informal means of childcare. Such arrangements are often unreliable and inadequate and there are no sup-

port services geared to help informal childcarers provide appropriate play and learning opportunities for children.

Mothers with good qualifications and high earning power are much more likely to go back to work after having children as they can afford the childcare. Less than a third of mothers with no qualifications return to work compared to three-quarters of mothers with A levels or higher qualifications.

The 1989 Children Act placed a duty on local authorities to provide childcare for children who are in need.

Childcare has been acknowledged as a positive form of family support for children whose families are in serious crisis, children whose health or development is in jeopardy and children with disabilities. However, shrinking budgets mean cuts have been made year after year in childcare provision. In England, 32,900 children had places in local authority day nurseries and childminders employed by local authorities in 1985 compared with 28,900 in 1995. A high proportion of these children attended part-time.

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By Ian Burrell

THE Government has issued an unprecedented ban on handling or eating pigeons found within 10 miles of the Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant because of fears that they are radioactive. The notice has been issued by the Ministry for Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, after batches of more than 150 killed local pigeons were found to have high levels of radiation contamination.

The Independent revealed last week that the birds had been tested by British Nuclear Fuels (BNFL) scientists after suspicions by an inspector from the Royal Society for the Protection of Animals.

The inspector had earlier been called to a bird sanctuary in the nearby village of Seascale in Cumbria to carry out a cull of 150 pigeons after the sanctuary's flock of some 700 birds became the subject of complaints from local residents.

The dead birds were analysed in a series of batches and were found to be highly contaminated.

BNFL staff are now planning to dig up the garden at the Singing Surf bird sanctuary, owned by sisters Jane and Bette Robinson, and take the pigeons to the Sellafield buildings, some of which are easily accessed by pigeons and gulls.

However, they also claim the local atmosphere is heavily polluted by the nuclear reprocessing plant, exposing the pigeons as well as the human population to radiation.

BNFL is also planning either to "power-wash" or dig up the tarmac driveway at Singing Surf, in order to remove further traces of radiation.

Since the first cull, BNFL officials have culled a further 200 birds and the remaining pigeons at Singing Surf may also have to be captured and destroyed. MAFF continues to carry out its own independent tests into how the birds became contaminated. Government officials are also seeking to minimise the risk that the radioactive pigeons pose to the public. In its notice, MAFF states: "As a precaution, local residents are being advised not to handle, slaughter or consume any pigeons found within a 10-

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Classical music's big names add their weight to campaign

By David Lister
Arts News Editor

Some of the biggest names from the world of British classical music have joined *The Independent's* campaign to end the crisis in the arts.

The conductor Sir Simon Rattle, composer Sir Peter Maxwell Davies and music director of The English National Opera, Paul Daniel, who won a Laurence Olivier Award this week for his achievements with ENO, have signed up to the campaign. The fashion designer Zandra Rhodes has also lent her support.

Sir Simon has made the City Of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra a global force since becoming music director. But despite this, it has suffered severe problems of funding. The tax breaks we are advocating for donors would provide an additional source of funding for such a popular orchestra.

The Independent and Independent On Sunday campaign is urging the Chancellor to simplify the tax system for those giving to the arts and make all donations tax deductible in his budget on 17 March. This would increase the amount individuals give to the arts, and help end the financial crisis cultural institutions are facing.

Leading lights in the arts continue to come on board the campaign. Last week, two of the biggest names in British theatre lent their support — the musicals impresario Sir Cameron Mackintosh, and the actor Ian Holm. They join a list that includes Sir Peter Hall, Alan Ayckbourn, Fiona Shaw and Harriet Walter. Readers have been writing in with their support in large numbers, showing the desire that exists in Britain to give to the arts and to end the anomalies that in effect penalise people for doing so.

We are urging Mr Brown to use his budget to introduce a change in taxation law to enable people to make tax-free dona-

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Scientists blow whistle on sunscreen lotions

By Nicholas Schoon
in Philadelphia

THERE IS no good evidence that sunscreen lotions protect against melanomas, one of the most lethal and fast-growing cancers, scientists told the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science yesterday.

"It's not safe to rely on sunscreens," said Marianne Berwick, an epidemiologist at the Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Centre in New York. "Your genetic disposition to these cancers is the most important factor." A large, population-based study she had done found the melanoma risk for people with many moles was six times higher than that of someone with only a few. The risk for someone with the type of colouring which gives with greatest sensitivity to sunshine - red or fair hair, light-coloured eyes - was almost six times that for a Caucasian with dark hair and eyes.

Lotions certainly stop burning but do not appear to stop melanomas. For a white person in northern Europe, the lifetime risk of contracting one of these cancers is around one in 100. About a fifth of victims are killed by them. They are rare and more lethal than the two other types, known as non-melanoma. The main cause of all three is ultra-violet rays in sunshine, which damage DNA. Dr Berwick examined 10

epidemiological studies into melanoma and sunscreen use. Six indicated that the more sunscreen one used, the more likely one was to develop the cancer. Two suggested the opposite conclusion, and the other two showed no link at all.

She concluded there were so many problems and "confounding factors" with such studies that it was unsafe to draw any conclusions. For instance, people who burnt easily might use lotions to stay out in the sun for longer - thereby preventing the sunburn which would otherwise have made them get out of the sun. But this would mean exposing themselves to more than they should, and running a higher risk of melanoma.

Oxford University chemist John Noland said he had grave doubts about an ultra-violet blocking ingredient used in a few lotions, called Padimate-O, or octyl-dimethyl PAB. When sunlight is shone on it, it releases chemicals which can damage DNA. He found this to be the case for isolated DNA and for the DNA inside skin cells when these are cultured in a test tube. He believes it is possible that when the chemical is rubbed over the skin, some could penetrate the cells.

"I would not use a sunscreen containing this chemical," he said.

"Unfortunately, EU regulations do not require manufacturers to state that it is an



Photograph: Alex Lentati

Mad dogs and Englishmen: Lotions prevent burning but do not appear to stop melanomas, one of the most lethal, fast-growing cancers

ingredient in writing on the bottle, but this should be a requirement." He said some products state they are "PAB-free", some admit to containing it and many give consumers no

hint. The experts say people should use a lotion which claims to block both ultra-violet B and ultra-violet A radiation. But the best advice is to limit your exposure to strong sunshine, es-

pecially if you have sensitive skin.

Professor Jouini Uitto, of Philadelphia's Thomas Jefferson University, told the meeting his research group had

genetically engineered a breed of mouse which can give insights into how sunlight wrinkles and ages human skin.

The mice contain the human gene which switches on the

production of elastin, a key structural protein which gives tissue their springiness. As the skin ages, the normal arrangement of orderly elastin fibres is transformed into large, hap-

hazard clumps, causing the skin surface to become leathery and wrinkled. He has shown ultra-violet radiation activates this gene in the mouse, leading to large-scale elastin production.

'Gang tried to sell £2.8m of rhino horn'

UNDERCOVER animal welfare investigators posed as buyers to sting a gang trying to sell £2.8m worth of rhinoceros horn, a court heard yesterday.

The gang was recruited by a former antiques dealer serving a life sentence for murder who had collected the horns before it became illegal to sell them. King's Lynn Crown Court was told.

Wilfred Bull, 63, wanted to sell the 127 horns in preparation for his release from prison and called in a "lady friend", Carol Scotchford-Hughes, who brought in another couple, David Eley and Elaine Arscott.

But Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals officers and police were tipped off after Ms Arscott, using a false name, phoned the London Stock Exchange to inquire about selling them.

The unsuspecting gang held several meetings - one of which was bugged - with the undercover officers at a hotel in Cambridge to talk about the deal. RSPCA inspector Alan Fisher told the court he was in regular contact with the gang in 1996 to make the arrangements.

Mr Fisher told the court Mr Eley referred to the rhino horns as "antique chairs" for security reasons. Unaware the conversation was bugged, and the deal was fixed for 3 September 1996.

The gang were arrested af-

ter police raided a store in west London where the horns were being kept.

The court had earlier been told that rhinos were an endangered species and it was illegal to trade in them or their horn. "If you kill the trade, it reduces the incentive for destroying the animals," said John Farmer, opening the case for the prosecution.

The horn is seen as an aphrodisiac in the Far East and fetches £12,000 per kilogram. Mr Farmer told the court.

Bull, who was jailed at the Old Bailey in 1986 for the murder of his wife Patsy a year earlier, contacted a legal executive, Paul Rextrew, from his prison cell to arrange the financial transaction and launder the money, the jury was told.

Mr Rextrew, of Wimbledon, south-west London, denies conspiracy to sell rhino horns, claiming he knew they were dealing with art treasures and animal trophies but did not know it was rhino horn.

The jury has been told that Carol Scotchford-Hughes of Willingham, Cambridgeshire, and Elaine Arscott and David Eley, both of Great Shelford, Cambridgeshire, have pleaded guilty to the charge. Bull has pleaded guilty to the charge under the Control of Trade in Endangered Species (Enforcement Regulations) Act 1985.

The hearing continues today.

Ads turn teenagers on to smoking

By Jeremy Laurance
Health Editor

MORE THAN a third of teenagers are lured into experimenting with cigarettes by tobacco advertising and promotion, researchers say.

The power of advertising in recruiting young smokers is demonstrated by a study which shows teenagers who notice cigarette ads or acquire a promotional item are much more likely to take up smoking than others.

Scientists who interviewed 1,750 American adolescents aged 12 to 17 in 1993 who had never smoked and who said they had no plans to start, even if a friend offered them a cigarette, found half had progressed towards smoking when interviewed again three years later.

Almost 30 per cent had experimented with smoking and 3.6 per cent had consumed at least 100 cigarettes in total. A

further 16.6 per cent had become susceptible to smoking.

The change in their attitude over the three years was closely linked to their attitude to cigarette advertising. Those who had a favourite ad in 1993, more than half the total, were twice as likely to have started smoking in 1996 or to be willing to start.

Those who owned a promotional item or were willing to use one in 1993 were nearly three times as likely to progress towards smoking.

The authors, from the University of California, say in the *Journal of the American Medical Association*: "We estimate that 34 per cent of all experimentation in California between 1993 and 1996 can be attributed to tobacco promotional activities." They say the influence of advertising was greater than that of other smokers, contrary to the findings of other studies.

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Masons escape forced exposure

By Jason Bennetto
Crime Correspondent

NEW recruits to the police, magistrates, prison and the Crown Prosecution Service will have to declare whether they are Freemasons in future, but most workers in the criminal justice system, particularly judges, are expected to escape compulsory registration.

Jack Straw, the Home Secretary, yesterday called on the United Grand Lodge to publish a list of its Freemasons and threatened to introduce new laws to force members of the secret society to be identified if details were not released. The Freemasons indicated that they are unlikely to co-operate.

The Home Office plans appear to have been watered down by the refusal of judges to reveal whether they are Freemasons. Lord Irvine, the Lord Chancellor, has been fighting a rearguard action against the Home Office and has argued that a register would be an infringement of the judiciary's privacy and individual rights.

Yesterday's announcement follows an inquiry into secret societies by the Commons Home

Affairs Select Committee, which called for a register to be set up and made publicly available.

The chairman of the committee yesterday criticised the judiciary and said it was a "non-sense" to suggest the Government could not force all members of the criminal justice system to disclose their membership of a secret society.

Action against societies, in particular the Freemasons, whose 500,000 British members are divided into about 9,500 lodges, was demanded after decades of concern that members of the society, particularly police officers, are abusing their membership of the "brotherhood".

As revealed in *The Independent* in November, all future recruits to the justice organisations in England and Wales will have to register their membership of the Freemasons. The Home Office is also considering whether members who are transferred or promoted will also have to declare membership. The Home Secretary has written to the United Grand Lodge requesting the names and occupations of members working in the criminal justice field.



Secret society: New recruits to criminal justice system will have to declare membership of the Freemasons

Photograph: Universal Pictorial Press

But John Hamill, spokesman for the Lodge, said yesterday it would be extremely expensive and difficult to provide a list. He added: "The general feeling is why are we being singled out. The idea that we are going to be forced to do something sticks in the throat of a lot of Freemasons."

If, as expected, they refuse

the Home Office intends to set up a voluntary register of about 250,000 criminal justice workers which will be made available to the public. Anyone who refuses to disclose whether they are a member or not is likely to be considered a Freemason. The final sanction, if the voluntary list is unworkable, will be legislation for a compulsory register.

Chris Mullin, the Labour chairman of the Home Affairs select committee, while welcoming the announcement as a step in the right direction, was highly critical of the judges for holding back the reforms. He accused them of having "a sense of their own self-importance". He added that it was "non-sense" to suggest that existing

employees, such as judges, could not be forced to register, pointing out that MPs and councillors already have to declare their interests.

Alan Beith, the Liberal Democrat home affairs spokesman said that judges should not be allowed to hide Masonic links. But one senior judge, Lord Justice Millett, who is a Freema-

son, yesterday bitterly condemned the new rules.

"There is no sense in it. It's an unwarranted interference in our private lives and it doesn't achieve anything," he told BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme.

"What are people supposed to do? You can't choose which judge will try your case, so what's the point?"

Dobson battles Brown on NHS

By Colin Brown
Chief Political Correspondent

FRANK DOBSON and the Chancellor Gordon Brown are locked in a Cabinet battle over demands by the Secretary of State for Health for an extra £500m to end the waiting list crisis in NHS hospitals, which will be revealed tomorrow.

Amid fears that the Government will be accused of breaking one of its key election pledges that waiting lists will be cut, Mr Dobson has got the broad backing of the Prime Minister to add around £2bn to the NHS budget next year, but Mr Brown is holding out.

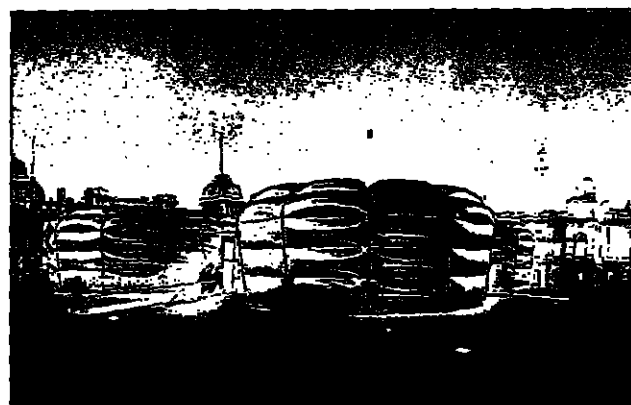
The Chancellor added an extra £300m to the NHS budget to avoid a winter crisis last year, and he announced an increase in spending on the NHS of £1.2bn from 1 April as the centre-piece of his Budget in July last year.

Mr Dobson is arguing that he has applied some unpalatable medicine to the NHS with tight pay restraint on the nurses to meet the Chancellor's tough spending limits, but the demands facing the NHS which he inherited from the Tories are greater than expected.

Whitehall officials have confirmed that the waiting list figures due to be published tomorrow will continue to show a rise in the number of patients waiting for treatment, but the bad figures will reinforce Mr Dobson's demands for more money.

Mr Dobson yesterday gave a clear signal that the figures would be bad, when he praised the hard work of nurses and doctors in coping with the extra demand, which showed no let-up in spite of the mild winter. The numbers being treated will show a rise to record 2.39 million in the last quarter.

He told the Local Government Association that his commitment to give priority to coping with emergency cases had led to increases in waiting lists for elective surgery.



Beating the drum: The powerhouse:UK's mini-domes

Beckett offers showcase of the UK powerhouse

By Nonie Niesewand
Architecture Correspondent

"THE FACE of modern Britain is more than the Spice Girls. *The Full Monty*, or Soho at night," Margaret Beckett, the President of the Board of Trade, believes.

To prove it, the Department of Trade and Industry has commissioned a £1m exhibition, called powerhouse:UK, to be a

showcase for British design. "This exhibition reflects what is happening in multi-cultural Britain. Good design makes for good business," Mrs Beckett said.

"Our partners in Europe and Asia appreciate this as much as we do. We see powerhouse:UK as a unique opportunity to put the best of cutting edge British design on show to

stimulate business across frontiers." Even if Britain doesn't always manufacture it.

Trade delegates and diplomats from Asia and Europe attending the ASEM 2 summit from 2-4 April will visit the exhibition to be held in four silver inflatable mini-domes in the heart of Whitehall at Horse Guards Parade.

Four steel framed drums, each

of which hold 300-400 people, have been themed by two architects, Doug Branson and Nigel Coates, to reflect lifestyle, communications, learning and networking. After the summit the public can attend for a fortnight until 19 April.

The designer Alexander McQueen's ravishing ballgowns (made in France) rub shoulders with Tom Dixon's ingenious

light that doubles as a footstool made (in Britain) from traffic bollards. Oasis (half of whose profits go to Creation Records in Japan) will play as visitors interact with computer games, and audio-visuals.

The four pavilions are a miniaturised version of Branson Coates' National Centre for Pop Music in Sheffield which opens in August.

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Recruiting crisis hits classroom standards

By Judith Judd
Education Editor

MINISTERS will today be told by their own backbenchers that they will jeopardise the Government's education standards drive unless they act more boldly to solve the teacher recruitment crisis.

In a blunt speech, Margaret Hodge, chairman of the all-party Commons select committee on education, will argue that the Government's response to the committee's report on recruitment is disappointing. Applications for one-year post-graduate teacher training courses are down 10 per cent on the same time last year. The drop for maths is 22 per cent and for physics 34 per cent.

Applications for undergraduate courses, mainly primary, are down 15 per cent.

The proportion of unsuccessful applicants to post-graduate courses has also fallen sharply over the last three years, suggesting that colleges and universities are having to admit students of poorer quality.

Yesterday, a new survey revealed that a quarter of primary headships remained unfilled last term because no suitable candidates applied.

Ms Hodge will tell MPs that the £1.5m government advertising campaign to attract recruits is not enough. "The advertising campaign, whilst welcome, will be ineffective unless it is part of a wider strategy. The Government must respond more enthusiastically than they have so far to the radical proposals in our report."

The committee wants the Government to take up proposals such as financial incentives for new teachers, for example, paying off student loans, and extra cash to keep good teachers in the classroom.

Ministers believe that heads are the key to higher standards but nearly half the schools in yesterday's survey carried out by the National Association of Head Teachers attracted six or fewer applications for the headship. Six is considered an absolute minimum for an adequate shortlist.

The survey, produced by John Howson of Education Data Services, also shows that governors failed to fill more than a quarter of the deputy headships advertised.

Headships have traditionally been hard to fill in London and south-east England, but Mr Howson said the difficulties had now spread to other areas. David Hart, the association's general secretary, said: "These recruitment figures are a sharp reminder to the Government that they are in danger of presiding over a recruitment crisis which demands an urgent resolution."

Mr Howson pointed out that in maths, the proportion of applicants for teacher training courses not offered a place is 10 per cent, compared with 17 per cent three years ago. In English it is 16 per cent compared with 26 per cent.

He said: "I should be very surprised if the quality is not suffering in some way. This suggests that we are taking some people who are marginally unsuited to teaching."

The Teacher Training Agency, the quango in charge of recruitment, is known to be looking at ways of promoting headship. An agency spokesman said that not enough people were coming forward for headship because they felt unprepared. "The new national professional qualification for heads which we have put in place will make a difference," he said.



Challenge of the sands

SOLDIERS from the 1st Battalion the Parachute Regiment yesterday prepare to tackle a six-day, 143-mile run across the Sahara by training on the sandy terrain of Long Valley, Aldershot.

The team will undertake the 'toughest foot-race on earth', the Marathon des Sables, in Morocco at the end of next month to raise money for Imperial Cancer Research and Airborne Forces Charities.

The team doctor, Captain Mike McErlain, is using the training to research stress fractures, a local weakening of the bone, which are common in athletes and during military training. Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

DAILY POEM

Anon

By Gerald Dawe

*My Prague scarf has no name nor maker.
I bought it that time we waltzed around
the freezing city: trad' jazz in the bars,
the foggy castle above, shadowy beggars
on the bridge and the foreign kids
hanging loose on the corporate squares.
This was hip, my dream city, you were it,
and no one could see me in behind
the Prague scarf, hidden like a bandit.*

This poem comes from *Signals*, an anthology of poetry and prose from writers involved in the first Abbey Arts Week, organised by the Abbey Grammar School in Newry. *Signals*, edited by Adrian Rice, costs £8.95 (paperback) from The Abbey Press, Courtenay Hill, Newry, County Down BT34 2ED.

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Robotic Yeltsin raises fears he is losing the plot

By Phil Reeves in Moscow

TECHNICALLY, he did not put a foot wrong. He acknowledged Russia's economic and social problems, hailed its slender victories, and charted a glorious, so far elusive, path to growth. There was a swipe at the US over Iraq, and a jab at his parliament over the budget.

But the content of Boris Yeltsin's now customary annual "state of the nation" address is only half of the story. Just as the world used to watch Ronald Reagan's public appearances for his gaffes, it now scrutinises Mr Yeltsin's performances for clues to his state of health.

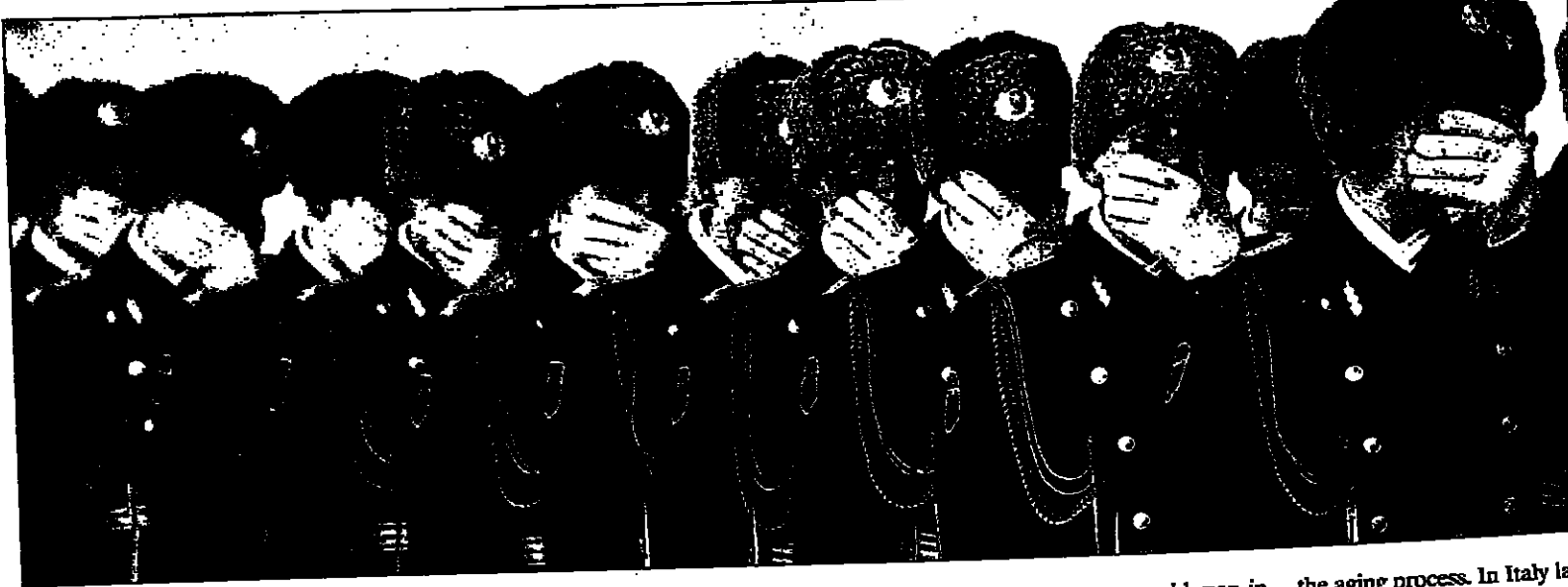
For 30 minutes the Russian President spoke in a normal and more or less clear voice to a joint session of both houses of parliament in the Kremlin. His handlers were confident enough to allow his speech to be televised live, knowing that one stammer, one slur, is enough to yield alarmist headlines and with them nervous-

ness among international investors and in the markets.

Yet, although he survived unscathed, yesterday's lacklustre and robotic speech was far from triumphant, despite his claims that Russia is on course for its first growth since reforms began in 1992. Rather, it was a reminder that Boris Yeltsin is a faded figure, very different from the obsessive, flamboyant iconoclast and workaholic who ousted Mikhail Gorbachev in 1991.

Moscow - a city which makes up for the lack of meaningful politics by ceaselessly speculating about who will be the country's next all-powerful president - has long been debating the possibility that Mr Yeltsin will seek a third term.

But it looks about as likely as Russia beating Australia at cricket. "I find it difficult to imagine Yeltsin running again," said Dmitri Trenin, a leading political analyst. "Nor am I sure that the Russian voters would allow him, to."



Russian soldiers guarding against the cold at a reception for the Chinese premier. Photograph: Reuters

Russia now appears to be used to the notion that Mr Yeltsin is not on his death-bed, despite the persistent scares about his health (although two ambulances accompanied him everywhere on his last foreign outing). Some observers still privately insist that he is bare-

ly more alive than the embalmed body of Lenin in Red Square, but most acknowledge that his doctors were probably telling the truth when they said his quintuple coronary bypass in 1996 was a success.

The issue has shifted to more mundane territory. His is

a gradual decline, compared with Brezhnev's later years. The difference is that Brezhnev presided over a static stagnant system: Mr Yeltsin heads one in fast-fluctuating transition.

Although relatively youthful by Western standards - he has just turned 67 - Mr Yeltsin

has long been an old man in Russian terms, having lived nine years longer than the average male. Power, politics and his own destructive personality have weathered even this tough Siberian. Every now and then, the world gets awkward and unhappy glimpses of

the aging process. In Italy last week, he became muddled when answering reporters' questions and made a few minor blunders of protocol.

His occasional eccentric outbursts - for example, his claim in Rome that the UN Secretary-General, Kofi An-

nan, had already agreed to go to Iraq, or his announcement that he "loves Italian women" - can be attributed to a tendency to overact in the international limelight. But the slips and moments of confusion denote an old man who, every now and then, loses the thread.

There was only one flash of the pugilistic, passionate Yeltsin during yesterday's performance. After he ended his speech, the hell-raising nationalist Vladimir Zhirinovskiy, freshly returned from a farcical trip to Baghdad, began to hector him from the floor about the Iraq crisis. "There is not a single person in this who has involved himself more in Iraq than I have," replied an angry Mr Yeltsin, who was later due to meet the Chinese premier, Li Peng. But it was not enough to be truly convincing.

Clinton to admit Lewinsky relations

By John Carlin in Washington

THE White House has admitted for the first time that President Clinton did have a relationship with Monica Lewinsky.

Mike McCurry, the President's chief spokesman, said that while the relationship may have been "simple" and "innocent" it had probably been "very complicated".

Mr McCurry added that sooner or later Bill Clinton would have to provide a full account of what exactly had transpired between himself and the former White House intern, who allegedly told a friend on tape that she had an affair with the President when she was 21.

The President has denied having had an "improper" or "sexual" relationship with Ms Lewinsky but, in an interview published in yesterday's *Chicago Tribune*, Mr McCurry acknowledged that something had gone on.

"Maybe there'll be a simple, innocent explanation," he said. "I don't think so, because I think we would have offered that up already."

Mr McCurry, who had previously insisted that he was in the dark as to the details of the Lewinsky affair, said the President had been hesitant to reveal more for fear of providing his enemies with the opportunity to twist the truth.

"We are not in a position to provide a full and complete account, so the art is to make sure everything we say is truthful and credible," said Mr McCurry, offering a glimpse of the calculated manipulation of public perceptions of which he has been a part.

As for his own, personal, apparently less varnished view of what the truth might be, Mr McCurry said: "I think it's going to end up being a very complicated story, as most human relationships are. And I don't think it's going to be entirely easy to explain, maybe."

But he did say that allegations that Mr Clinton had sex in the Oval Office where "pretty implausible" because there was "so much traffic" in and out of the President's office.

On the face of it, Mr McCurry's statements smack of treachery. His boss, backed up forcibly by Hillary Clinton, has flatly denied having had an affair with Ms Lewinsky.

But now Mr McCurry, the President's hitherto loyal lieutenant, is openly venturing the view that the relationship may not have been "innocent".

He is also suggesting it may not be "entirely easy to explain" and, perhaps most damning of all instead of squarely endorsing the President's denial of a sexual relationship, Mr McCurry is prepared to go no fur-

ther than to say that the notion of illicit sex in the Oval Office is "pretty implausible" - a remark open to the interpretation that sex in some other White House chamber may have been less implausible.

It could be that Mr McCurry, who wanted to leave the President's employment a year ago but succumbed to pressure to stay on, is heartily fed up of enduring the daily indignity of responding to reporters' questions with evasions and half-truths.

He may have seen the interview with the *Chicago Tribune* as an opportunity pre-emptively to distance himself from any unseemliness that might emerge once the truth about the Lewinsky affair is finally known.

An alternative explanation



Relationship: Bill Clinton and Monica Lewinsky

might be that Mr McCurry's remarks were artfully constructed in consultation with the President and his advisers, in which case the suggestion would seem to be that Mr Clinton is seeking to prepare the public for revelations that in some way deviate from the forceful denials he has issued so far.

Whatever Mr McCurry's agenda may be, it does appear to anticipate the likelihood that Ms Lewinsky will be obliged to give her version of events before the Grand Jury soon, possibly this week.

According to all the indications so far, Ms Lewinsky will sooner or later reveal that the relationship with the President was far from innocent, and very complicated indeed.

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A question of war: does the UN hold the key?

THE following is a transcript of a question-and-answer session between *The Independent* and a Foreign Office spokesman yesterday:

The Foreign Office is playing it all by the book, Anthony Bevin is told

The spokesman was asked whether it was still the government position, as stated by Robin Cook, the Foreign Secretary, in the House of Commons last week, that a United Nations Security Council Resolution would be sought by the United Kingdom for a clear, unambiguous endorsement of military action before such action was taken.

Spokesman: "The position on legal justification is as follows: The first point to make is that any military action which might involve UK forces will be firmly based on international law. The Charter of the UN allows for the use of force under the authority of the Security Council."

[He then put his answer into its known historical context, saying:] "The Security Council resolution adopted before the Gulf conflict authorised the use of force in order to restore international peace and security in the region."

"Iraq is in clear breach - UN Security Council members are agreed upon this - in clear breach of Resolution 687, which laid down the conditions for the ceasefire at the end of the conflict, and those conditions included a requirement on Iraq to eliminate its weapons of mass destruction under international supervision."

[After that historical parenthesis the spokesman then returned to the central question - the need for a new resolution, authorising the use of force now, saying:] "As for what we're seeking at the Security Council, we're looking for the adoption in the Security Council of a resolution at an appropriate time."

"Obviously, the timing is going to depend very much on what happens with Kofi Annan's (the UN Secretary-General) visit to Baghdad, if indeed it goes ahead, which is the assumption."

"And we feel that it's desirable

able from every point of view [our italics] that the Security Council should give a firm and united signal [our italics] to Saddam of the unacceptability of Iraq's conduct, its obstructionism, and that a Security Council Resolution would be a good way of doing that."

"So the Government's going to continue to act in accordance with international law, including the Charter of the UN."

"But if military action is needed against Iraq, then the precise justification will depend on the circumstances of the time."

"At the moment, the main game in town, the focus of the next few days is going to be Kofi Annan's visit to Baghdad. That is as full an answer as I can give. I think."

Question: But it doesn't quite answer the question that Mr Cook answered in the House [on 10 February, *Hansard*, col 149]. Tam Dalyell asked: Does the House have the clear, unambiguous undertaking that, before military action is taken, we will return to the Security Council of the United Nations for its clear, unambiguous endorsement of that military action?

To which Mr Cook replied: A large number of diplomats in the Foreign Office have been working towards precisely that objective [our italics] for several days. We hope to table that [our italics] resolution in New York this week and I hope that the resolution will gain the support of the Security Council, so certainly I give [Mr Dalyell] that assurance [our italics].

Spokesman: "Well, far be it from me to unsay anything Mr Cook has said. I have given you as clear an explanation as I can, as I understand it, from the legal point of view."

Question: But are you saying we have legal backing for the

use of force without a new resolution?

Spokesman: "What I am saying is that Iraq is in breach. It is desirable to have a further Security Council resolution, which is why we're working towards that end."

Question: Desirable, but not necessary?

Spokesman: "I choose my words."

Question: Can I take it, therefore, that you are choosing your words from a script?

Spokesman: "I think you can take that."

Question: Can I ask who I need to speak to, to understand why the Foreign Office is not going as far as the Foreign Secretary?

Spokesman: "Of course we should go as far as the Foreign Secretary. We very often cite chapter and verse of what the Foreign Secretary has said."

Question: But not on this occasion?

Spokesman: "Well, I have just said I am not going to unsay anything the Foreign Secretary has said."

Question: All right, but would you go so far as to say, to repeat the words the Foreign Secretary used?

Spokesman: "Yes. I am giving you a gloss, an explanation of the Security Council resolution."

Question: Does that mean we could not take action without a further resolution of the Security Council?

Spokesman: "I have told you as much as I am going to tell you."



Line up: An instructor trains student volunteers at a Baghdad college yesterday. Iraq is preparing civilian defence corps in case of attack. Photograph: Reuters

Resolutions provide support for hawks and doves

THE US and Britain believe that existing United Nations decisions give them the right to attack Iraq whether Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary-General, goes there or not.

As usual, the language is imprecise. UN Resolution 678 of 29 November 1990, for instance, which supplied the green light for Operation Desert Storm, did not mention air strikes or invasion, nor even the word "force". But it handed the coalition the right to employ "all necessary means" to evict Iraq from Kuwait, and "restore international peace and stability in the area". The point was lost on no one.

Resolution 687 of 3 April 1991 is the formal ceasefire

agreement ending the Gulf War. It created Unsum, the weapons inspection body at the centre of the dispute, and demands Iraq "unconditionally accept the destruction, removal and rendering harmless, under international supervision, of all chemical and biological weapons". It makes compliance a pre-condition for lifting the sanctions which have crippled Iraq's economy.

But the crucial passage is the elliptically phrased paragraph 34, committing the UN to take "such further steps as may be required" to implement the resolution, and "to secure peace and security in the area".

Those who favour military action now insist that is all the legal

green light they need. The allied coalition against Saddam Hussein is of course a shadow of its former self, reduced to little more than Britain and the United States, with the tacit backing of the smaller Gulf States and the distinctly uneasy blessing of most of the traditional European allies. But most important for Washington, the formulaic authorisations of 1990 and 1991 are intact - which explains why US has been so uneasy about going back to the UN at all.

At best (as it has in fact happened), protracted deliberations in New York would merely advertise differences among the P-5 - the five permanent, veto-wielding, members of the

Security Council. At worst, the US and Britain might have found themselves in the position of vetoing a majority resolution which would have diluted Resolution 687 (and, they would argue, Resolution 678 before that) - or of sponsoring a motion renewing the right to use force, only to see it rejected by other P-5 members. Not exactly a resounding international mandate for a savage aerial bombardment of Iraqi targets.

Indeed, the categorical joint rejection of the use of force yesterday by Russia and China, in favour of a political solution that would clear the way to a lifting of the oil embargo and other sanctions against Iraq, leaves scant doubt of what would have

occurred. Thus, assuming he does go to Baghdad, Mr Annan will bring no more than the "common advice" of the P-5 - a mandate perhaps, but something short of a UN resolution.

But advocates of an attack claim that having flouted 687's requirements, Iraq has breached the ceasefire terms and thus returned itself to a state of war with the allies. And if the UN does not act to enforce its resolutions, argues Sir Robin Renwick, the former British Ambassador to Washington, it might as well pull out of the resolutions business altogether. To which, of course, critics would reply: if Iraq, then why not Israel? But that is another story.

— Rupert Cornwell

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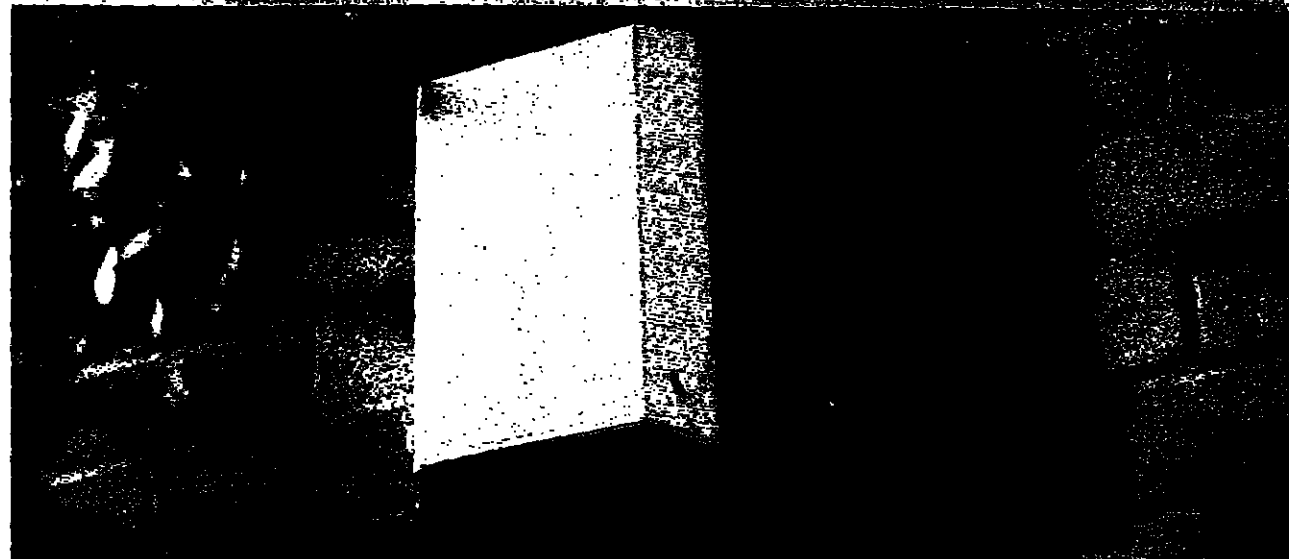


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Bahrain joins league against military strikes

By Raymond Whitaker
in Kuwait City

BAHRAIN, the base for US Navy warships which would deliver the bulk of any armed strike against Iraq, yesterday joined the growing number of Gulf states expressing strong opposition to military action to solve the crisis.

"The first priority should be given to the diplomatic effort and a peaceful solution to the crisis, no matter what it takes, because we fear the other alternative in his confrontation will be no less than a catastrophe to this region, the Arab world and the Middle East," said Bahraini Crown Prince, Sheikh Hamad al-Khalifa. The dangerous consequences of a military showdown "could not be accepted on the Gulf, regional or international levels".

While the Gulf's oil monarchies have no desire to see Saddam Hussein holding weapons of mass destruction, they fear the unpredictable consequences of a military campaign the objectives of which are less clear cut and much harder to achieve than in 1991. Apart from the possibility of retaliation by Iraq, Sheikh Khalifa's comments reflect their con-

cern that successful military action against President Saddam could simply increase the dangers they face. Seven years ago, the Western allies discovered that near-unanimous support in the Arab world for the removal of Iraqi forces from Kuwait quickly evaporated when it came to ousting the Iraqi leader himself.

Even if he were to be significantly weakened, the Sunni Muslim states of the Gulf believe, it could lead to the break-up of Iraq, creating an unstable Shia Muslim entity on their borders which would inevitably look towards Iran. "Iraq, the most secular state in the Arab world, is regarded as a virgin territory by Islamic extremists," said a Kuwaiti analyst. "Sunni and Shia elements are vying for position in the power vacuum which would result if Saddam departs."

Some of that unease was reflected by Sheikh Khalifa, who said yesterday: "No Arab would accept a military strike against another Arab country... if it is not itself the aggressor... as happened in the 1990 invasion of Kuwait. The current situation between Iraq and the United Nations is different to that."

Bahrain was following oth-

er Gulf monarchies, such as the United Arab Emirates, in openly trying to slow the increasing momentum towards military action. On Monday, the UAE cabinet said it "rejected the use of force against Iraq and demanded a solution to the crisis by peaceful means". Qatar's foreign minister, Sheikh Hamad al-Thani, was due to return yesterday from a meeting with President Saddam in Baghdad. He is the most senior Gulf representative to go to Iraq since the Gulf War.

Even Saudi Arabia, which suffered missile attacks and a Iraqi troop incursion in 1991, has refused to allow US forces to use its bases, and King Fahd has referred specifically to Iraq's "territorial integrity". He called for diplomacy to be exhausted to bring the crisis over weapons inspections to an end.

Kuwait, where 6,000 US ground troops are stationed and another six Stealth fighter-bombers are on the way, has avoided public comment on the lack of support in the Gulf Cooperation Council for a military solution. Last week, it hosted a meeting of GCC foreign ministers which stressed that no member of the organisation would itself take part in any attacks.



Protect and survive: An Israeli soldier helps with a gas mask at a distribution centre yesterday Photograph: AP

Hamas puts Israel on notice of revenge

By Eric Silver
in Jerusalem

THE military wing of Hamas threatened yesterday to attack Israeli targets if the United States takes military action against Saddam Hussein.

In a statement distributed in Gaza yesterday, the Islamic militants' Izz al-Deen al-Qassam Brigades said: "We will not stand with our hands tied if the Iraqi people and their children, or any other Arab or Muslim people, are subjected to US military attacks."

"We will answer this in our special way by hitting the Zionist heartland and its monstrous entity. We consider this a continuation of our holy struggle against the Zionist enemy."

Hamas has killed dozens of Israeli civilians in suicide bombings over the past two years. In the most recent of these, 21 died in a Jerusalem market and a shopping centre last August and September.

Since then, Israeli and Palestinian security services have weakened Hamas by smashing key West Bank cells. Israel last night dismissed the threat as "bombastic rhetoric". Israeli spokesmen do not underestimate the group's capacity to strike again, but question whether it needs the pretext of Saddam Hussein.

Sheikh Ahmed Yassin, Hamas's founder and spiritual mentor, said yesterday: "People have feelings, and the Palestinian and Arab people are boiling at what is happening in Iraq. It would be natural if there were a suitable reaction to US injustice."

He urged Arabs to boycott American goods. "If we can't fight them militarily," he said, "let's fight them economically."

Chances of peaceful solution rests on UN offer to Iraq

By Rupert Cornwell
and John Carlin in Washington

The chances of a diplomatic solution to the Iraq crisis were hanging last night by the thread of a visit to Baghdad by the United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan, carrying an agreed joint offer from the five permanent members of the Security Council.

As yet more United States weaponry moved to the Gulf, President Jacques Chirac of France warned the visiting Iraqi

Foreign Minister, Mohammed Saeed al-Sahhaf, in Paris that "time was running out" for a diplomatic solution, and that his country faced "extremely serious risks" if it continued to bar its so-called "presidential sites" from inspection by Unscm experts.

But there were signs that Iraq might just be edging towards a climbdown, and the outlines of a diplomatic solution that might be acceptable even to Britain and the US, the two hawks on the Security Council, were beginning to emerge.

This could be in the form of an 'Unscm-plus', providing unfettered access for a UN inspectors team accompanied by diplomats or other officials.

Elaboration of a proposal along these lines was the prime task of a further session in New York last night between Mr Annan and representatives of the "P-5".

British officials hinted that a deal was "very close". But whether the arrangement would satisfy Washington's insistence on the "integrity of the Unscm" mission remained to be seen. Unscm, said the US

Ambassador to the UN, Bill Richardson, "must be the key; it must run everything." And in a televised address broadcast live from the pentagon, President Clinton was as resolute as ever. In his toughest warning yet to Saddam Hussein, he declared his determination "to do the right thing" for future generations in the event of diplomacy, his preferred option "by far" failing to deliver a solution.

"If we fail to respond today, Saddam and all those who would follow in his footsteps will be emboldened tomorrow by the

knowledge that he can act with impunity, even in the face of a clear message from the United Nations Security Council and clear evidence of weapons of mass destruction," the President said.

He also issued a veiled warning to Mr Annan. "To be a genuine solution, and not simply one that glosses over the remaining problem, a diplomatic solution must include or meet a clear, immutable, reasonable, simple standard."

"Iraq must agree and soon, to free, full unfettered access to these sites anywhere

in the country," the President said noting that those were the terms Saddam agreed with the UN at the end of the Gulf War. "If he accepts them, force will not be necessary."

"If he refuses to, or continues to evade his obligations through more tactics of delay and deception, he and he alone will be to blame for the consequences."

Now all eyes are on Mr Annan. He will announce today whether he will go to Baghdad, as everyone (except perhaps the Americans) seems to wish.

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Ian Rickson prepares to step up in the world Photos: Peter Payne/Geraint Lewis

Upstairs, downstairs

Whatever you do, don't ask Ian Rickson if Stephen Daldry's is a hard act to follow. Sarah Hemming meets the new man in charge at the Royal Court

When the Royal Court announced last August that Ian Rickson was to be its new artistic director, a ripple of polite surprise ran round the arts media pond. One of the most significant jobs in English theatre had been given to a director who was "unknown" or "little-known", depending on which paper you read. Rickson now responds to the description with a phlegmatic shrug. "It's far more interesting for the papers to say 'Man on Street Given Job' than 'Safe Internal Appointment'," he says, good-naturedly.

In fact, to regulars at the theatre, his work and name were anything but unknown. As an associate director to Stephen Daldry, he helped to navigate the Court's passage through the past five years, surely one of the most exciting periods of the theatre's history. He staged some of the critical new plays, most significantly Jez Butterworth's *Mojo*, which he read, seized upon and steered straight on to the main stage – a daring manoeuvre with a debut script. His most recent production is *The Weir*, Conor McPherson's award-winning piece, which is about to reopen on the larger stage. His instinct and passion for new writing is as evident as his pride in the theatre he works for.

"I think that, where the Court is, that's where playwriting is in the country," he says. "When I arrived, there'd been six new plays downstairs, the theatre upstairs had been shut, and playwriting was in a rather depressing position in the culture. The energy was with classics and directors as auteurs. And I think that, as the Court has altered, playwriting has moved into a position of centrality in the culture. What I'm hoping is that we've really won ourselves a mandate for consolidation."

Though his statements can sound a touch New Labour, Rickson is a warm and instantly likeable person. He is not in the least pompous or affected, and he addresses questions with genuine concentration. His style is courteous but informal – he conducts the interview curled up on a sofa in his stocking feet – and he clicks his fingers impatiently when searching for a point.

But while he is approachable and dis-

armingly modest, one also gets the impression that he is pretty focused. This is a man who can talk energetically about the state of theatre while eating sushi – with chopsticks – with uncanny dexterity.

He will need all his energy and determination when he takes over his new job in April. His pronouncements about the Court's role might sound grand, but they are largely true. The wave of young writing that has poured out of the theatre during Daldry's leadership has brought a fizz and excitement to new drama, reasserting its relevance.

The theatre's temporary exile in the West End, while its Sloane Square building is refurbished, has lent a buzz to the area. The theatre has worked hard and is riding high. But this is a precarious position. The very essence of its success lies in unpredictability. If audiences start to know what to expect, the theatre's programme could soon seem as stale as a season of boulevard comedies. The impetus, Rickson agrees, could vanish in a moment. But, he adds, "the thing about waves is there is always another one coming. You've got to be clever enough to work out what it is."

So what of the next wave? Can we expect more of the youthful anger that has surged through the most recent one? Rickson, pointing out that what fuels such anger is a deep-felt compassion, maintains that the Court has "a duty" to present that work. *The Weir*, however, has proved a complete contrast: a haunting and profoundly moving piece about loss, set in an Irish pub.

Rickson admits it was a relief not to call in the night director for once. "In *The Weir* the most angry moment is a slight argument which is very quickly hushed up with a handshake," he says, laughing. "It's so hard to be general about movements... but I think there is a more personal, even spiritual, strain coming through now, which is perhaps part of the seeking time we're living in. You do want to work against preconceptions all the time. The trick is always to be as responsive as possible."

He is mindful, however, of the dangers of being overly seduced by the new. Part of his brief, he feels, is to keep faith with existing writers and provide continuity and

security for them. In his first season, a new play by Sarah Kane, who wrote the notorious *Blasted*, will be mounted on the main stage, and he has already commissioned a third play from her. His dream for the Court, he says, is clear: to transfer "that energy that has been so potent in the theatre upstairs to the theatre downstairs".

The challenge doesn't end with the programming, however. Rickson has to step into the shoes of the charismatic Stephen Daldry, whose charm alone has been the subject of an entire newspaper feature. It must be rather like coming up behind an older brother who was captain of the rugby team. Is Daldry a hard act to follow?

"In the first interview I did I might have said something like that," says Rickson, sounding just slightly defensive.

his hand in the finished product. He seems able to get under the skin of a play and can find the moral centre and the compassion in even the toughest piece. He starts when he picks up the script.

"The first question," he says, "is 'does it touch me?' I always start from an emotional basis. And then I look for the feeling of being taken into another world."

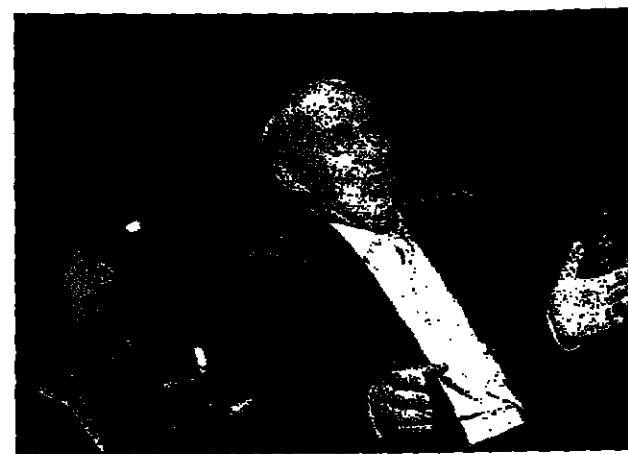
When he is rehearsing, he literally takes his cast into another world by going on field trips. This is a strategy that is more fun with some plays than others: for *The Weir*, he got the cast to practise drinking the exact amount of alcohol that is consumed in the play; for Joe Penhall's *Pale Horse*, however, he had them visit a morgue.

"Ian's approach is very holistic," says Conor McPherson, author of *The Weir*. "He wants the playwright present at auditions and a cast who will get on well. So the atmosphere is very good in rehearsals, and the actors always look comfortable on stage. I think he's a very secure person in himself, so he's not afraid to let things go. He's a brave director, too. He brought out a tenderness in my play that I would have been too embarrassed to point out, if I had directed it."

Rickson's ability to put one at ease and his infectious passion for the work will clearly stand him in good stead as artistic director. But there remains the personal danger, experienced by many fine directors, that running a building can steal creative energy. Rickson is determined that this won't happen to him – despite the fact that he has to raise another £4m to complete the theatre's refurbishment and oversee a smooth transition back to Sloane Square.

"I really want to protect the purely creative side of the job – being in rehearsal and working with playwrights – because that's what it's about," he says. "But actually, running a building is a very creative thing. If you are in rehearsals, that is the bottom line of what the theatre is about. And bringing that energy into discussions about toilet-roll-holders is thoroughly appropriate."

The Weir previews from today and opens on Monday at the Royal Court Downstairs, Duke of York's, London WC2 (0171-565 5000)



For Conor McPherson's *'The Weir'*, Rickson got his cast to practise drinking the exact amount of alcohol that is consumed in the play; for Joe Penhall's *'Pale Horse'*, however, he had them visit a morgue

"It's become something of a cliché and something I wish I'd never said. You want things to be a hard act to follow because that makes it much harder. It would be much easier to take over something that was really rundown and spruce it up."

Rickson's strongest card when he applied for the job was his track record on stage. He seems to have a rare affinity with new writing and a talent for working with it. Every production of his has a different feel to it; you can seldom see

the desired necromantic potency from their appearances. Cross-casting, however, highlights the sexual ambivalence suggested by Shakespeare's reference to "beards", as well as enabling the three actors to reappear in many of the supporting roles, cleverly blurring still further the play's divide, or overlap, between foul and fair.

The production's central weakness, though, lies with its central player. Gerard Murphy falls gamely but ineffectually between the two main stools presented by Macbeth's character: neither is he forceful or charismatic enough for an anti-hero, nor is he the small man overwhelmed by events and a domineering wife. Not that Anne Myatt's witchily voluptuous Lady Macbeth lacks authority, but she does lack a clearly defined foil or focus for her efforts.

Elsewhere, "sturdily proficient" best sums up most of the performances; faint praise which reflects a prevailing haziness of characterisation and contrast – Stuart Bowman's Macduff being an honourable exception – and an overall dearth of synergy about the ensemble work. And maybe it's a petty-minded quibble, but in a Scottish production of the Scottish play, surely one might hope to find more than one Scottish accent?

Upstairs in the Circle Studio, meanwhile, something completely, bewilderingly – yet somehow compellingly – different is unfolding; although, if pushed, one could possibly draw some intriguing parallels between Shakespeare's and Heiner Müller's respective milieux of cancerous malevolence, desperate power-games and violent social disintegration.

A howling air-raid siren precedes the opening blackout, in an empty, bare-floored space illuminated by 300-odd naked light-bulbs studding the ceiling. In the darkness, there's an explosion, then the lights come up on the fallen, dust-smattered figures of a man and a woman. They are, it transpires, the Marquise de Merteuil and her erstwhile lover Valmont, the chief characters from Laclos's *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*, transposed to some mid-apocalyptic ne'er world where time is punctuated by further explosions, bells ringing to signal meal-times, and sundry other seemingly meaningless, but inflexible, rules and rituals. Once again the pair are locked in a vicious, vitriolic battle for supremacy or submission – though who wants which remains teasingly ambiguous.

It's a frequently baffling piece, Müller's spikily aphoristic dialogue rarely deigning to link itself into anything resembling narrative, though the essential themes of sex, death, mortality, (a)morality, and the attempt to find liberation by embracing decadence and corruption all surface vividly enough. Quite why the Marquise, however, starts omitting all the *Les Liaisons* from her words during the play's middle section is just one of a good many mysteries, given the scarcity of reference to any present external world.

The sheer intensity, though, of Andrea Hart's and Genard McArthur's performances, combined with tremendous vocal and physical discipline, commands the attention even when you don't have a clue what's going on. Each strikes a beautifully counterpointing balance between the mannered and the manic, formality and animal ferocity. Hart all bottled-up, spilling over fury and seething lust; McArthur quieter, more urbane, but unquestionably just as poisonous. Rarely will you witness two such complete, controlled performances.

In rep to 7 March, Glasgow Citizens Theatre (0141 429 0022)



Dangerous liaisons: at the court of King Macbeth

Photograph: Donald MacLeod

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'She's all right, Jack

Melanie Rickey checks out hassle-free shopping at the high street's next big thing. Photography by Sheridan Morley

One of the decade's biggest retail gambles is about to begin: next week a new chain of women's fashion stores will launch into the fiercely competitive quality end of the high street. But unlike Jigsaw, which opened one store in Hampstead when it launched in 1972 and then grew gradually, Jack will arrive with a bang. Twelve stores by the end of 1998, and 35 by 2000.

Simon Green, its founder and creative director, says Jack is a concept shop for confident women who know what they want from clothes and fashion, and who don't need to be dictated to from above. He calls it "anti-pigeonholing" and says it is about attitude rather than age, income, or any other demographic statistic.

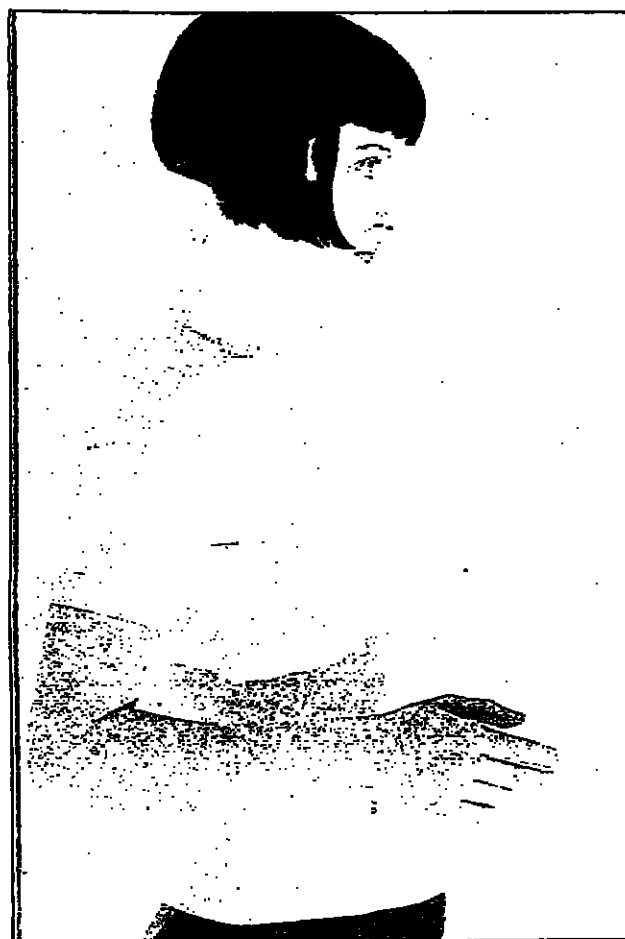
Their customer (a thirty-something career woman with children), on the other hand, will probably quite like Jack because both the clothes and the shops are approachable. "Anti-pigeonholing?" I don't think so.

Jack has been put together by marketing men who have sat down at a table and decided what busy British women want from clothes and shopping at the end of the 20th century. They propose that we want modernity, with ready-made, well-designed clothing solutions all wrapped up in futuristic architecture and suede padded walls designed by Wallpaper* favourites Soft-room. And a clothes vending machine from Japan which (when it arrives) will dispense vacuum-packed T-shirts and undies outside each shop after hours at the touch of a button.

Jack's woman already shops at Jigsaw, Whistles and Nicole Farhi. So how will they tempt her away? Green sees it as an intellectual challenge. "People are nervous of new brands, it won't be easy, but we see the potential," he says. The clothes are certainly unfussy, stylish, safe and very wearable, and nothing costs more than £250. Indeed the collection is carefully worked out to have a place in the wardrobe of today's "I've worked out what suits me". Nineties woman/capsule dresser, and there will be new clothes in store every week to stop her getting bored.

Trousers and suiting are available in the nation's favourite hues: black, cocoa, navy, stone and taupe, with pin-stripe optional. Their merino, cotton and wool knits in soft shades of raspberry, slate, moss and more taupe come in every conceivable shape, and are excellent for now. They will be popular with women who love the styling of TSE Cashmere but can't afford it. Their slim-fit shirts will attract Helmut Lang fans in the same way. Skirts too are available in every colour and length, and it all works together.

"It is a very ambitious project, sometimes I would think, 'I must be mad,'" says Green, who comes from a middle-market fashion background and has worked with Fenwick and House of Fraser. Eventually support came from Rodney East, Etam's ex-managing director, who came out of retirement to become chief executive of Jack. As a team Green and East know the psychology of the high street like the proverbial back of the hand. Together they gathered eight in-



vestors who raised the finance.

Despite its obvious middle-of-the-road approach, and the fact that the clothes only go up to a size 14, Jack does have some new ideas. There will only be a few so-called "must-have" fashion items on sale. "We know pink will only sell for a week, we won't be going to town on it," he says of this spring's hottest colour. In place of pink things and their ilk, there will be limited edition carrier bags and glossy coffee-table brochures to take away which will promote their Best of British ideal - just as the name, with its connotations of the Union Jack, does.

Fashion fans will also approve of the clothing labels which will identify when the clothing was bought with details such as "Jack s/s [spring/summer] 98" displayed. Also sure to catch on at other shops are the no-hassle assistants with Polaroid cameras who, instead of

saying "miniskirts are really in this season, you'll get lots of wear out of it," will take a quick photograph of an item for the uncertain shopper to peruse at home instead.

The Egan Melia designed adverts for Jack in the March issues of *Vogue*, *Elle* and *Marie Claire* are aimed to intrigue, annoy, and be remembered. People are asking, "What is Jack?" and though it is hard to tell just what the adverts are about (a shop? a person? a hoax?) this was precisely their point. You'll have to decide for yourself.

The first Jack opens on March 1 at Unit 60, Royal Station Concourse, Windsor, and on 7 March at 24 High Street, Marlow. In mid-March two stores open in London, at 192 Westbourne Grove, London W11 and 110 Marylebone High Street, London W1. These dates are subject to slight change.



Hot thing: the 504 'Jackie Brown' hat by Kangol



Forget Samuel L. Jackson and Robert de Niro. The biggest star of Tarantino's new movie *Jackie Brown* is Kangol. Barely a frame goes by without Cumbria's finest export - complete with kangaroo logo - being flashed on the silver screen.

Apparently, Mr Jackson is Kangol's number one fan. He

can't get enough of the soft wool peaked caps. If Monica Lewinsky can sell a few thousand more berets for Donna Karan with a few paparazzi shots, just imagine what Mr Jackson will do for Kangol's sales when the movie is released here next month. It's enough to warrant the Key to the Lake District.

The story of Kangol is a strange one that has both baffled and delighted its founders. How could they have predicted that their 50-year-old 504 cap and the terry towelling golfer's hat would become the most wanted accessories of the Eighties by the coolest of the rap pack? Now, with the help of Samuel L. Jackson, it's happening for Kangol all over again. Tamsin Blanchard

هنا من الأصل



Stylist: Sophia Neophitou
Hair and make-up: Fiona Moore for Jo Hansford using Aveda
Model: Camilla at Storm

Clockwise from above: Navy slash neck cotton rib jumper, £70; navy split miniskirt, £60; navy knee-high socks, £6, by Hue, available from department stores nationwide; black shoes, £45, from Clarks, Regent Street, London W1 and stores nationwide, inquiries 0990-785 886.

Ceramic cotton beige shirt, £50.

White short-sleeved cotton polo neck, £40; jeans, £65.

Lime green short-sleeved shirt, £45; lime green cotton knit cardigan, £80.

All clothes by Jack.
For further information, call 0171-585 3321

OUT OF THE CLOSET Wayne Hemingway



In the first of a new series on fashion celebrities' wardrobe secrets, Wayne Hemingway of Red or Dead fame talks to Holly Davies about his closet secrets and admits to being a complete clothes junkie, having never thrown a piece of clothing away in his life.

"My absolute favourite piece of clothing has to be my *Blue Peter* woolly jumper. I bought it when I was a teenager from a jumble sale 19 years ago. I first wore it when I was a student in London and I thought then it looked a bit grungy and a bit funny. My wife hides it now. I haven't worn it for about three years but discovered it tucked up in the back of my wardrobe three weeks ago. It's like an old comfort blanket, it's shrunken and got holes in it. I still wear it because it appeals to my sense of irony. A 37-year-old in a *Blue Peter* jumper I think is completely sad but brilliant!"

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The end of the De Klerks' lengthy marriage mirrors a change affecting their whole nation.
By Mary Braid

IT WAS the Valentine's Day bombshell. The former South African president F W de Klerk, 61, has announced that he is divorcing his wife Marike 60, after 39 years of marriage. Mr de Klerk's decision to separate came with the usual amendments: the decision had not been easy to take – not least because Marike was opposed to a split – and he had gone through a great deal of pain in making it.

There were other predictable features. When rumours of trouble in the marriage surfaced a few weeks ago, Mr de Klerk, who shared a Nobel Peace Prize with President Nelson Mandela for ending white minority rule, said he was in the midst of a personal crisis that was hurting his family. He pleaded with the media for a little space.

At that stage of course there was no mention of another woman but Elita Georgiadis, 45, the wife of a Greek shipping magnate, was already waiting breathlessly in the wings. Within days that too became public and a home-grown scandal managed to knock Zipporah off South Africa's front pages.

Mrs Georgiadis and her husband, Tony, emerged, had been close friends of the de Klerks and the two couples had holidayed together at the Georgiadis' English estate and on board their yacht. According to press reports Mr Georgiadis was a great supporter of Mr de Klerk and a contributor to National Party coffers.

It is of course not the first time that he has taken South Africa by surprise. In 1990 his decision to unban the ANC and release Mr Mandela stunned the country, and particularly his tribe, the Afrikaners, many of whom regard him as a traitor.

But if the right was poleaxed by the political revolution it is also at sea about the break-up of the de Klerk marriage. Like whites' God-given right to govern, their union – an outstanding example of a loyal and faithful marriage and traditional family values – had been one of those things Afrikaners could depend on. Suddenly another old certainty went up in smoke.

The Afrikaner establishment has done its best to save the marriage, which produced three children, now grown-up and married. Dr Jan Visser, chairman of the Gereformeerde Kerk, of which de Klerk is a



The image that broke: F.W. de Klerk with his wife Marike and their granddaughter Cristel

Photograph: G Rancin/Sygma

Part of a wider split

member, said: "One can only hope and pray that Mr de Klerk comes to his senses for the glory of God, and for the sake of his wife and family, the Afrikaner and the church."

But the pastor's comments seemed a little dull and out-timed against the utterances of Mr de Klerk and Mrs Georgiadis whose heart-on-sleeve comments were heart-warming and at the same time a little embarrassing. He talked of a love that would not be denied despite all his internal conversations with the Almighty and his self-imposed two year ban on seeing Mrs Georgiadis; she was interviewed sobbing on a plane bound for Athens about the unintended love that had shattered her life.

Their affair apparently stretches back at least four years; that revelation has prompted speculation that Mr de Klerk was less than frank when he gave up the leadership of the beleaguered National Party last year apparently to make way for a younger man. The new relationship, it is claimed, had a big influence on his decision.

Reaction of Afrikaner churchmen has been predictable: reaction of the wider public less so. In the dark old days of apartheid, newspapers gave little space to the private lives of public figures and politicians. This is partly because South Africa, torn apart by the liberation war, had bigger things to think about. But a lingering 1950s conservatism also played its part.

Conservative Afrikaners apart, people have tended not to see the divorce as a sign of post-apartheid moral decline (for most that would be a contradiction in terms anyway). While Mrs de Klerk did come out fighting – inextricably linking her marriage to the National Party – public sympathy was tempered by her widespread unpopularity. Regarded as more right-wing and racist than her husband, Mrs de Klerk is remembered for her vehement opposition to her son Willem's engagement to a coloured – mixed race – South African in the 1980s.

Her current misfortune has provided newspapers with a golden opportunity to run

through some of her classic political statements such as her explanation of "coloured" during a lecture to pensioners in 1983.

"The definition of a 'coloured' in the population register is someone that is not black, and that is not white, and is also not Indian," she told them. "They are the leftovers." One newspaper quipped last week "Not the only ones, Marike?"

In the absence of public outrage there was in fact a fair degree of prurient interest, an indication that south African attitudes are changing or that they changed long ago and the trend was distorted by the restrictions of the old regime.

That is not to say that it is just Afrikaners who cling to the old rules. The Reverend Kenneth Meshoe, black leader of the African Christian Democratic Party, last week attacked both Mr de Klerk and President Mandela for the example they were setting to the young.

Mr Meshoe said it was unacceptable for the President to be living with his companion

Mrs Graca Machel without being married. He said neither Nobel Prize winner was helping to re-establish South Africa's moral fibre. Mr Mandela has admitted he is unhappy with his living arrangements but says he takes his cue from Mrs Machel whom he says has him "blossoming like a flower". Mrs Machel, a widow, does not want to marry again.

But most politicians seem keen to keep the personal and political strictly separate in South Africa; eager, perhaps, for a French rather than British model. When asked last week if Mr de Klerk's problems did not undermine his stance on family values, the National Party said the matter was entirely private and that that had been the NP's position during President Mandela's divorce from his wife, Winnie, and the questions raised over his relationship with Mrs Machel.

For every moral proscriber there are many more South Africans who see life as a deal more complicated than the old rules would suggest. Bald statistics are testimony to that. South Africa's divorce rate has

been high for years. Long before the end of apartheid, whites bore most responsibility for that. But in the post-apartheid era, black couples are divorcing more.

Black divorce rates were not recorded until the 1994 democratic elections but their numbers are rocketing. "For some time, the rate [for whites, Indians and coloureds] has been about two in five marriages ending in divorce," says Liz Dooley, a counsellor with the Family Life Centre, a relationship support agency. "It is among urban blacks that is now rising. Emancipation of women is having a major impact. There are many more opportunities for black women now and they are becoming much more assertive."

If the De Klerk separation is a sign of any post-apartheid loosening up, Miss Dooley suggests, it is part of a relaxation taking place all over the world. Ending four decades of marriage is painful but perhaps the task is less daunting when you began the dismantling of apartheid after many more years of white minority rule.

Those who mourn must queue to be comforted

ANXIOUS? Bereaved? Addicted to shopping? Worried about the future of your marriage? Stressed out? The solution to any of these problems is the same, nowadays: get yourself a counsellor.

As life becomes ever more demanding, the chance to sit quietly and indulge in talking of nothing but one's own problems and feelings is a temptation many find hard to resist.

But if counselling is the solution, it is harder to find it than you think. Although the last 10 years have seen a huge increase in counselling organisations you still can't just pick up the phone and request a counsellor.

ANNABELLE THORPE

People in the most difficult of circumstances are having to wait, for several weeks, or even months, for help.

Jenny, whose mother died last year, handled the bereavement well at first but then became increasingly depressed and anxious. "I always told myself that I would get counselling if I felt I needed it," she says, "and as I began to find it difficult to cope it seemed like a helping hand. Until I began to try to make an appointment. There are no branches of Cruse [the National Bereavement counselling charity] in Central London, and the bereavement organisation I did find couldn't offer me an appointment for four weeks. The state I was in, four weeks seemed like a lifetime."

Jenny finally got an appointment with the counsellor attached to her local GP's practice, but even that wasn't easy. "I had to see a GP who made the referral, but then I didn't hear from the counsellor for over a week. When she did offer me an appointment it was three weeks away. I got more and more panicky because I felt that no-one would help me. Eventually I got a cancellation and saw her after ten days – but it was only due to my efforts."

John Dilley of Cruse admits the delay between making the call and actually seeing a counsellor can cause problems. "Many of our branches have no waiting lists, but there are some that find it difficult to cope with the demand," he says. "We simply don't have enough counsellors."

Lynn Walsh of the British Association for Counselling be-

lieves that there is a common misconception about the numbers of counsellors available. "There seems to be a general media perception that there are thousands of counsellors, available when anyone wants them. The fact is that there are waiting lists – particularly in more rural areas – and the demand for counsellors is far greater than the services provided."

"We are encouraging GPs to take on counsellors – even if it's one for a whole practice. Patients then have access to counselling and some mental health problems can be nipped in the bud by getting fairly immediate attention."

Although GPs can find the funds to employ counsellors, charities do not always have the resources. "We are constantly underfunded," John Dilley says, "and Cruse is a fairly low profile charity. Dying and grief are still considered taboo for many people and they don't want to be associated with a charity that deals exclusively with bereavement."

Organisations offering counselling for other problems have similar delays in offering sessions. London Marriage Guidance, for instance, offers 200 appointments a week – and those are just in the evening – but there are still waiting lists. "The public attitude to counselling has changed enormously," says Judy Cunningham, its director. "It is no longer seen as a sign of some sort of disorder and there is no stigma. People are much happier about admitting they need help."

But Ms Cunningham believes a delay might also be helpful in some circumstances. There is a difference, she says, between crisis counselling, which needs immediate help, and relationship counselling. "People have to come to terms with the idea of counselling and it's better to let them adjust rather than rush them straight in to see someone," she says.

But for people in crisis like Jenny, admitting they need help and then finding there is none immediately available can be a huge problem. "Once I realised I needed to talk to someone I felt panicky when I couldn't," she says. "When I told my friends about my experience of trying to get counselling they were amazed. They all thought the same as me, that getting an appointment was as easy as making a phone call. It's a shock when you find out that it's not that simple – at a time when the last thing you need is any kind of shock at all."

Can you write the story of the year for six to nine year olds?

Win £2,000 and have your story published

The big picture starts with the details

I USUALLY start a book by getting lots of things that are the same together. Themes, ideas, a period in time. Then I do vast quantities of research. I steep myself in the voices of the era and I tend to read as much as possible. This can take months, really it should take years and it only stops when I feel a spark bring everything together.

I keep vast, exhaustive notebooks of all the information I have collected. This includes detailed plans on the order of the narrative. I write notes before starting a book and then continuously throughout.

In my early life I was constantly interrupted. With children, with teaching and I found that having the notes provided a certain continuity. I might have three or four A4 notebooks per novel which are absolutely full to the brim. I usually end up making an index just for my notebooks, so I can find the little details as soon as I need them.

I used to go through 20 drafts of a novel, but then discovered that if you are pretty sure what you are going to say before you put pen to paper the process is much easier. I now do one draft in ink and one on my computer.



AS Byatt: "If you don't like the slog of writing, you shouldn't be doing it"

It is important not to write what I call a dead novel. A dead novel is an imitation of other people's works. If your novel is dead then give up on it and do something else. But don't go on and on. The unsuccessful writer hangs on to something that doesn't quite work and doesn't know when to get rid of it.

Increasingly, it is important for me to make my books real page turners. The *avant garde* thing that plot is tedious and you should be rid of it is one of the great mistakes for writers.

There must be narrative. You have got to have motivation in a story. You must make the reader want to know what happens next. Sequence may be more primitive than causation, but that

really doesn't matter. Telling a good story is all-important. You have got to draw readers in.

Characters never work if they are based on one person you know. They need to be an amalgamation of at least two different people. The character has got to be independent of the original because this frees you to develop a new identity, which in turn prompts a certain momentum.

Writing is a hard slog. You have got to do lots of research, but I actually enjoy this side of writing because I keep discovering new things. People confuse the idea of research with school work and that's a problem. If you don't like the slog of writing, including all those months of research, then you really shouldn't be doing it.

As a child I loved reading myths, fairy stories and legends. My mother had a book of Norse myths which was my favourite. It was a grown-up book, but I just read it and read it. I also loved the Arthurian legends.

I didn't like stories about children because I wanted to stop being a child. I thought the Famous Five children were boring. When I got a bit older I

read most of Dickens and Walter Scott. I also adored *Pilgrim's Progress* which I read over and over again. I like it because it has narrative drive and it is set in a mythical world.

My own children loved being read to aloud. Beatrix Potter really captured their imagination because her sentences are so beautiful. I read the whole of the Lord of the Rings aloud to my two older children. The thing with Tolkien is that you get completely submerged into another world. I also read poetry to them. Walter De La Mare's *Come Hither* was a wonderful collection of poetry for children which is now out of print.

I think that children like long, complicated jingly language that they can savour. Not too many difficult words, just enough to enjoy.

If I had to choose something to take with me to a desert island, it would probably be a book of Browning's poetry because you can contemplate it for a long time and I might need something spiritual. If I know I'm going to be rescued I would probably take the complete Terry Pratchett because they are such fun.

The Independent/Scholastic Story of the Year Competition, now in its sixth successful year, aims to encourage top writing for the very difficult to please six to nine year old age group. To help you meet the challenge, some of our most successful novelists and scriptwriters will explain how they set about writing compelling narrative. A.S. Byatt, Booker prize winning author of *Possession*, *Babel Tower*, *Sell Life*, *Angels and Insects* tells Nicole Yeash of the importance to her of research

THE INDEPENDENT
Story of the Year 6

COMPETITION RULES

Story of the Year 6 offers a £2,000 prize for the winner, with £500 each for two runners up. The top 10 stories will be published in an anthology by Scholastic Children's Books. You are invited to submit stories of 1,500-2,500 words which must arrive on or before 28 February 1998 at: PO BOX 21302.

LONDON - WC1A 1PE. You may enter only once and entries must be made by the writer, not on his/her behalf. Entries must be typewritten, double-spaced and on one side of the paper only. We will not accept stories with illustrations. Manuscripts will not be returned, so please keep a copy. All entries must be unpublished, but published writers may enter with new material. Each entry must be submitted with both a cover page and title page. The cover page must feature the story title, and the entrant's name, address and telephone number. The title page must feature only the title of the story. The story should start on a new page, and the author's name must not feature on any of these pages, so that all entries can be judged anonymously. The winning story will be published in *The Independent* subsequent to the final judging of the competition which concludes on 22 May 1998. The top three stories and up to 10 others will be published in the autumn. In the anthology *Story of the Year 6* by Scholastic Children's Books. The competition is not open to employees of, or relatives of employees of, Scholastic Ltd or Newspaper Publishing plc or anyone connected with the competition. Proof of posting cannot be accepted as proof of delivery. No responsibility can be accepted for entries which are delayed, damaged, mislaid or wrongly delivered. The judges' decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into. Entry gives to Scholastic Ltd the exclusive right to publish an entrant's story in all formats throughout the world for the full legal term of copyright. A copy of the form of the contract may be obtained on application to Scholastic Ltd. By submitting an entry an entrant agrees to be bound by the terms of and to sign this agreement if called upon to do so. Any story chosen for publication in the anthology that does not win one of the top three cash prizes will receive a fee of £200. Any entry not submitted in the form specified will be deemed invalid. If your story is not published in the anthology or in the newspaper by the end of December 1998, these rights revert to you. Entry into this competition implies acceptance of these rules.

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Time to give working women a helping hand, Mr Brown



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WITHOUT working women, many of them mothers, the world economy would collapse. An increasing slice of global household income depends on women's efforts outside the home. In most Western countries, "family" means an incessant struggle to balance work, home and children, in which most of the burden – still, whatever the alleged changes in men's role and sensibilities – falls on women. It is time that this was recognised by the Government and acted upon.

We are supposed to be having a grand debate about the reform of the welfare state. Just this week the Social Market Foundation, a think tank tiding right, published a pamphlet, typical of the breed, under the portentous title "The Future of Welfare". It contained 10 essays. One was by Frank, one by David, another by Myron, another by Nicholas ... Not a single one was written by a woman. In it, women, the motors of welfare provision in the real world, were invisible – except as demonic

breeders of fatherless children. Not a single contribution recognised the centrality of child-care in the household economy and the aching difficulty many real women have in trying to combine their domestic and occupational obligations.

And that kind of male insouciance has been par for the course. The Beveridgean welfare state and the fiscal system that grew up post-war were at best paternalist, at worst they ascribed to women a marginal position as breeders and nurturers ... an index of women's position in the system is how few benefits are claimable by women in their own right, and how long it took the tax authorities to recognise that women have an existence independent of the man in the house. Once, to be fair, the tax and benefits system tried to recognise the fact that a household with children had vastly greater outgoings than one without, of which Child Benefit is the paltry legacy. But for most women of working age with children, the financial odds are tipped

against them: their lifetime earnings are severely reduced by the fact of having had children. Our system penalises households with children – yet they are our engines of social reproduction. The place where the new generation is being shaped and socialised ends up poorer. Allegedly "family friendly" Tory governments have made that situation worse.

The nub of the problem is child-care. Why are lone parents who want to work so often unable even to respond to the incentives the system offers to get off benefit (incentives which Chancellor Gordon Brown is striving to increase)? Why are British women at higher income levels relatively so reluctant to offer their talents and efforts to the paid economy? The answer is child-care. There will always be a mixed economy of child-care provision. The state could do much more to provide or facilitate the provision of pre-school places. All those glowing reports you read about Wisconsin, the American state that

allegedly has solved all its welfare problems ... they neglect to mention just how much child-care government agencies provide and even, where it is not geographically accessible, provide mothers with the means of transport to get to it.

The cutting edge of reform is rebalancing the tax take in favour of households with children. This is the substance of the campaign we are launching today. Yes, in some perfect world devised by a theory-driven economist, the tax code would have no encrustations, no reliefs or allowances. But here in the real world, there are gold-plated reliefs provided to Uncle Tom Cobbleigh and all – but not to that special group on whom society (yes indeed there is such a thing) depends for its posterity, working mothers.

If all employers were flexibly beneficent, there might be no need for state action. They are not. We need a universal child-care allowance made available to one parent in every household with children

below the age of 16. Whatever this or a future Chancellor might decide on the balance of taxation between the income bands, this "horizontal" redistribution between households with and without children is essential.

Gordon Brown inherited family-unfriendly policy from the Conservatives. It would be asking a lot for him to reverse it all in his first full budget in March, committed as he is to reworking state help to those in low-income employment. Welfare-to-work is a priority, yes, but Mr Brown will realise that this needs to be seen in a wider context. Women – in all households, at all income levels – have reservoirs of skill and energy. Too much of it is presently consumed in struggling to find satisfactory ways of looking after their children while they work. The Chancellor could do few things with more positive social and economic effect (not to mention electoral appeal) than start planning for a new child-care tax allowance.

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LETTERS

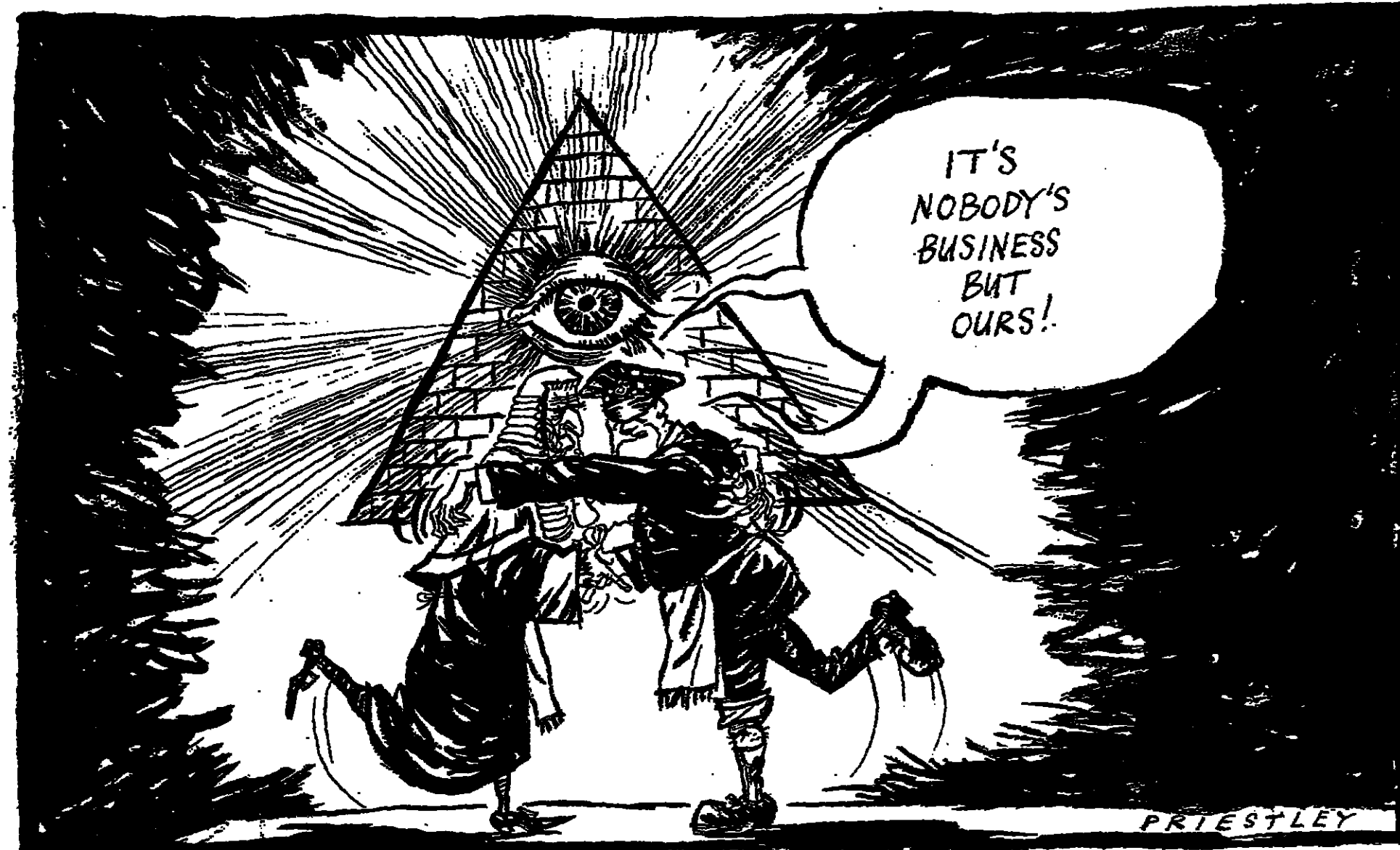
EU arms trade

THE Nobel laureates rightly draw attention to the need for tougher control over the arms trade (letter, 17 February). The British and French proposal for an EU Code of Conduct states that the EU has "a special responsibility to promote restraint and transparency" over arms transfers, and that it seeks to "set high common standards". This is to be applauded. No European government has previously taken such a bold initiative. However, there are certain essential standards that the Code must meet if it is to achieve these objectives: and the current proposal falls short of all that is needed.

All too often, EU states export arms to dictatorial regimes, or to regions of instability. The UK continues to arm the authoritarian regime in Indonesia; Sweden is considering selling fighter jets to Chile, despite 28 Latin American heads of state calling for an arms moratorium to avert an arms race; Germany and France are seeking to sell attack helicopters to Turkey, despite its appalling human rights record; and the Netherlands has recently licensed equipment to Algeria. In its current form, the Code could leave this unchanged.

The criteria must clearly state what the consequences of a breach of them will mean for arms exports. Tougher guidelines must be accompanied by clear multilateral consultation mechanisms. The Code should also make reference to the need for a rigorous system of parliamentary scrutiny. In a democratic Europe, parliaments, and the public, must be able to hold their governments to account for their decisions on this deadly trade.

We urge the member states to seize the opportunity to make a substantial contribution to international human rights, development and security by ensuring this initiative translates into an effective EU Code. **MIKE AARONSON, Director, General, Save the Children; BARRY COATES, Director, World Development Movement; PAUL EAVIS, Director, Saferworld; JULIAN FILOCHOWSKI, Director, CAFOD; MARTIN HONEYWELL, Associate Director, International Alert; IAN LINDEN, General Secretary, Catholic Institute for International Relations; DIANA MELROSE, Policy Director, Oxfam; DAN PLESCH, Director, BASIC; JANE WINDER, Director, One World Action, London WC1**



Iraq and the UN

THE measures which the United Nations Security Council sanctioned to secure Iraq's withdrawal from Kuwait in 1991 were soundly based. But on that sound base, in the heat of the general condemnation of Iraq, the United States secured the adoption of many resolutions which had very little to do with the original violation of international law. If the US had proposed public hanging of Saddam Hussein in front of the White House, the Security Council at that time would most probably have approved.

The threatened bombardment hence cannot be justified in this instance by reference to the formal resolutions of the Security Council. It should accord instead with the Charter of the UN. One of the basic requirements for mounting an attack on a sovereign state is that there should be an impending threat of use of force by that state. No one has produced any evidence that Iraq is going to attack any neighbouring state.

Mere possession of lethal weapons in itself does not make a case for attack: if that were so, several members of the United Nations, including most of the permanent members of the Security Council, would be suitable targets.

Dr KABIR-UR-RAHMAN KHAN
Edinburgh
The writer is former Senior Lecturer in the Department of Public International Law, University of Edinburgh

I AM dismayed that there has been so little concern for the possible effects of an American air strike against Iraq on the global environment.

In the devastation caused by burning oil wells during the Gulf War, not only was a beautiful and unique wilderness area destroyed, but coral reefs and fisheries were damaged, and bird migration was impeded on a vast scale. Much damage is said to be irretrievable.

FJ PRITCHARD
Malvern, Worcestershire

WHAT seems to have been least taken into account is the possibility of an American-British military assault on Iraq igniting a chain reaction that leads to international nuclear war.

Whatever the dangers posed by the Baghdad regime, the headlong military rush by Washington and London threatens to replace a very dangerous situation with a fatal one: out of the frying pan into the nuclear fire. If one lesson stands out from the history of war, it is that wars are far easier to start than to finish.

DAVID SAWYER
London N16

Hunger in Sri Lanka

IT IS particularly depressing that large numbers of people in Sri Lanka should be suffering from severe malnutrition ("Forgotten victims of war in Sri Lanka", 10 February) as that country was one of the first developing countries to bring its Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) down to a level indicating that

chronic, persistent hunger was no longer an issue. Continuing enlightened policies kept the IMR down to 17 per thousand even in 1996, after many years of civil war.

Even more depressing is the damage being done to the long-term prospects of those children who survive. Malnutrition stunts growth and reduces IQ; lack of specific micronutrients such as iodine reduce it further (when their contribution to the cocktail of debilitation and disease is not fatal). These losses cannot be made up later – there is no second chance. Lack of zinc and vitamin A also reduce the resistance of children to the rampant malaria which your report mentions.

The Sri Lankan government has provided an example to other countries with its distinguished record of providing for the basic needs of all of its people, in difficult circumstances. Let it not falter now.

BILL LINTON
London N13

RSC community care

DAVID LISTER puts the Royal Shakespeare Company's defence of its Newcastle season very well ("Bond of the Bard broken as theatrical friends fall out", 14 February). What he does not mention is the success and vitality of the RSC's community and education work in the north-east, which is left described by Michael Bogdanov as a "failure".

For the record, over the past 21 years, community and education work by the RSC has affected a whole generation. Each year in Newcastle, our education department works with more than 5,000 students, in up to four workshops a day, and holds regular in-service training sessions with teachers.

In addition, there has recently been an extensive programme of community events, including pre-show discussions and presentations, work in prisons and remand centres and special projects with disadvantaged groups, including the

deaf community and adult unemployed population. **ADRIAN NOBLE**
Artistic Director
Royal Shakespeare Company
Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire

Powell's resting place

"LYING in state" is hardly a correct description of the practice whereby the body of any member of the Westminster Abbey family, of which the late Enoch Powell, being a regular attendant at both St Margaret's Church and the Abbey, was a much-respected member, is allowed to rest in the Abbey overnight before the funeral (report, 16 February).

Perhaps those clergy who are so incensed at the decision taken by the Abbey authorities to allow this should be asked if they would disallow such a tribute to a regular member of their own church's congregation simply because of his or her political beliefs.

JAMES BOWEN
Northwood, Middlessex

Smokers who sue

SMOKING causes lung cancer – there's no question about that. And it causes other cancers and heart disease and diseases of the blood vessels too. But then alcohol causes cirrhosis and sunbathing causes skin cancer and we don't find people taking brewers and travel agents to court ("The story tobacco firms don't want to hear", 13 February).

As a doctor, I'd be delighted to see tobacco banned altogether. The reduction in human misery and NHS expenditure would be immense. But the risks of smoking and its addictive nature have been well known for 35 years, and still people have chosen to smoke. Tobacco companies are not responsible for people smoking, any more than bakeries are responsible for obesity or car manufacturers for dangerous driving.

Of course I am sorry for people with smoking-related diseases – my colleagues and I spend much of our time and much of the country's money trying to help them. But let them accept some responsibility for their own lives, and not try to shift the blame onto those who supplied what they wanted.

HUGH J THOMSON
Birmingham

I LIVE in a world where I have to stand in the cold to smoke, I am faced with no smoking signs everywhere, no smoking areas in restaurants and pubs, and a culture that treats smokers as second class citizens. On the shelves are all sorts of products to persuade me to give up and despite all this I still carry on smoking. I do it because I like smoking, and when I decide that I do not like smoking, then I will give up.

It is about time we stopped watering down very good law that has stood us in good stead for centuries to make way for laws that blame everyone and everything but the person who made the choice.

JOSEPHINE HUSSEY
London N8

Masons in the dock

IT IS to be hoped that, along with judges and other legal personages, Members of Parliament and above all cabinet ministers will be required to state their membership, if any, of the Freemasons. It would also be helpful, in criminal cases, if the accused were similarly required.

FAMELA DONOHUE
Sheffield

Dear Mad Butcher ... Perhaps not. Dear Mr Hussein, here is a remarkable offer



MILES KINGDON

EVERYONE hopes that Kofi Annan will fly to Baghdad with a note from the UN to sort out Saddam Hussein. However, Kofi is not exactly beating a path to his door. And this is for a good reason. The good reason is that it takes a lot of time to work out the best wording of a note from the UN to Saddam Hussein.

I mean, for a start, how do you address him? As "Dear Mr Hussein"? Or "Dear Saddam"? Or "Dear Mad Butcher of Baghdad"?

And even if you work out the best opening, what kind of letter do you then write to him?

Just how tricky the whole thing is is shown by the many drafts through which that note has already gone. Some of these drafts are available on the Internet, and for those of you unfortunate enough to be without a weblog*, I bring you today some of the first versions of that note to Saddam Hussein.

1. Dear Saddam, This is just to introduce myself. My name is Kofi Annan, and I am the new Secretary General of the United Nations. I notice from our books that we haven't seen you at one of our meetings for a long time, and your subscription is now well overdue. I wondered if I might stop by and talk about this and other problems? Yours sincerely ...

2. Dear Mr Hussein, As the breadwinner in your family, do you ever worry about what might happen if you were struck down by a heart attack? Or even worse, by a bomb that fell suddenly out of the sky and destroyed you along with your presidential palace? Well, we at United Nations Retirement Funds can help you with this sort of problem – and before it happens! ... All you have to do is ...

3. Dear Saddam, I represent an organisation called the United Nations, which is currently in your area at the moment. We specialise in weapons inspec-

tions, location of biological war tools, location of landmines, etc. and we would be prepared to do an ABSOLUTELY FREE inspection of your country to check on warfare potentiality. All we would need is unlimited access for a period. You would receive a free copy of our report and we would keep one ourselves. A representative will be calling soon to discuss this FREE offer ...

4. Dear Saddam Hussein, Hello! I am the new visiting pastor of the local United Nations Church, and I would like to make myself known on a one-to-one basis so that we can discuss the personal problems with neighbours that crop up at any time ...

5. Dear Mr Hussein, This letter is part of a chain that has been in existence now for THIRTEEN YEARS, and if you break that chain you will bring CATASTROPHES AND DISASTERS upon yourself. This is serious. All you have to do to avert

these DISASTERS AND CATASTROPHES is to write at the bottom of the letter "I renounce all use of chemical and biological weapons" and send it on to the next name in the chain, who is Kofi Annan, c/o United Nations, New York ...

6. Dear Mr Hussein, I am delighted to be able to tell you that you may already have won \$10,000,000,000 in a Lifting of Embargo Superdraw! Yes, you could be the lucky winner in this Lifting of Embargo Superdraw, which could win you \$10,000,000,000 in lifted embargoes! And all you have to do is send the enclosed envelope back! Yes, that's all you have to do! Oh, and also sign the enclosed form, saying that you don't mind anyone coming in and inspecting your weapons sites! That's it! That's ALL you have to do to be a winner, Mr Hussein! But don't forget – this has to be done by the end of the month! Otherwise we will kill you. Good luck, Mr Hussein!

7. Dear Mr Hussein, We are delighted to tell you that you have been selected by the United Nations Visa Card Unit for a MasterLoan offer of up to ten billion dollars! Just think of all the things you could do with ten billion dollars! New roads ... new schools ... new books for the new schools ... new packets of spaghetti for the new schools for little Iraqi children to make kindergarten pasta pictures with, to take home to their mummy and daddy, so that their mummy and daddy say, "Hey! This is good! Thanks to Saddam Hussein's insane foreign policy we are being starved, but now we can save our lives by cooking and eating our children's kindergarten art!"

Interested? We thought you would be! So send for details of the United Nations VisaCard MasterLoan Aid Plan NOW.

*Weblog. This is a new Internet word I have made up, which I hope will catch on. If it does, I will work out a meaning for it later.

Dear Alan and Will, Sorry. You'll have to try harder



**HAMISH
McRAE**
THE CASE FOR
JUNK MAIL

On Monday, my spouse received a letter from a couple of friends, Alan and Will, urging her to give up her subscription to this newspaper and take *The Guardian* and *The Observer* instead.

I suppose it was understandable that our friends should take that view since Alan happens to be editor of the former and Will of the latter. But the tone of their letter was odd. It addressed Frances as Mrs McRae instead of using her Christian name. It failed to note that I happened to write a column in both the daily and the Sunday *Independents*. It ignored the fact that she, as Frances Cairncross, had written for *The Guardian* for 10 years and for *The Observer* before that. Or that I had been financial editor of *The Guardian* for 14 years before coming here. It even managed to misspell the surname of the editor of *The Guardian* below the (correctly spelled but fuzzy) imprint of his signature.

Odd? Well, not really because of course the letter had not been sent by Alan or Will at all. It had been sent by a computer.

It was just one example of the extraordinary deluge of junk mail which now arrives through the letter-box every day. I guess like most people half of the stuff we receive is not sent by someone we know but simply because we are on some mailing list.

At some stage in the past we must have done something which indicated that we read *The Independent* and the list was bought by the Guardian group. The development of cheap computing power has enabled databases to be built which tell producers of goods and services a lot about us. Our banks of course know an enormous amount about our spending patterns, our phone companies know about our communications patterns, our supermarkets (if you have a loyalty card) know our weekly purchases, and so on.

This aggregation of data is common throughout the developed world but in Britain there is a further twist. Our postcode system, which enables an address to be identified to within a few houses, has had the side-effect of enabling British homes to be classified in a more precise and detailed way than any others in the world.

But at the moment, despite the plethora of loyalty cards, specialised lists, and post-code classification, it is all very crude. The typical response rate on a standard mailing is 0.75 per cent; anything over 1 per cent is considered to be excellent. So more than 99 per cent of the junk mail is just that. Add in the irritation factor and the waste is enormous. We suffer the invasion of our privacy – being on crude mailing lists where our details may well be wrong – without any of the advantages of better and more targeted services.

This is now starting to change very fast for the whole system is becoming much more intelligent. At last communications are reaching a stage where producers of goods

and services can know enough about their customers to be able to help them. Used ethically, the potential benefits to humankind are magnificent.

Three examples, one from the present and two from the near future. The present one concerns the way books are distributed on the Internet. Go onto the net and search for a book. You will find not only how to buy it through Amazon.com or the various other on-line ordering systems. You also get details, reviews, comments, maybe a link to the author's home page if he or she has one, the ability to add in your own comments, suggestions of other books of a similar vein, and so on. I found my own book on the future cross-referenced to Frances's now one on the future of telecommunications. In short, the net is already making precisely the connections which the junk-mailing computers fail to do.

Now throw this forward a few years. Your car signals to the dealer (through the mobile phone) when it needs a service, telling the dealer what has been happening to its fuel consumption or whatever other information the dealer needs. It also tells the dealer how many miles the car is being used in town, what routes are being used and so on. The dealer can contact you and explain that if you switched to a new model, there would be a saving of x pounds a year on fuel. And, if you change route to and from your workplace that would save y pounds. In short, the service provider would be using the information intelligently not just to sell something, but to enable the customer to have either a higher standard of living or a better quality of life for the same input of money.

Now take this a stage further. Suppose all the information about your income, spending, borrowing and saving could be classified centrally and analysed, perhaps by your bank. It would be possible to see whether you were spending too much for safety, borrowing at an unnecessarily high rate of interest, putting too much or too little into a pension, or paying an unnecessarily high rate of tax. The bank could then comb its customers' accounts, and genuinely help them manage things better. It might suggest small adjustments in the way the customers managed their finances that would enable them to have a generally higher standard of living; the bank might on the other hand be able to improve its own services, tailoring them more precisely to what their customer needed. At the moment these services are available to the very rich, who can afford the personal attention of highly paid people. What the information revolution does is to democratise this process, making available to ordinary people the quality of service previously only available to the very rich.

Of course there are dangers. Obviously there is the privacy issue. There are also dangers of social and economic exclusion. We are in danger of creating a system that works for all but the minority who do not have sufficient purchasing power to be worth trying to woo. For the most of us, however, anything that enables producers to connect more closely to the desires and needs of customers must improve the efficiency of the economic system. That is what better information about people can do. The developed world is going to have to rely increasingly on improved quality of information about the way people live their lives to drive living standards higher. We have already extracted most of the cost advantages that can be gained from increased efficiency in manufacturing; the next stage has to be increased efficiency in services and in distribution. Junk mail won't do that; intelligent analysis of what people really want will.

Amnesty's latest fear: how our genes may determine our fate



**ANDREW
BROWN**
THE SCIENCE OF
HUMAN RIGHTS

If modern biology can disassemble humanity into a kind of molecular Meccano, what sense does it make to talk about human rights? This question is not new. Its classic expression was in *Brave New World* (written by the brother of a leading biologist of his day), and the most succinct statement of the problem was made by Stewart Brand in the *Whole Earth Catalogue* 30 years ago, when he said, "We are as Gods, and might as well get good at it."

The godlike status of biologists in the public imagination is shown by a harrowing story that Ian Wilmut, the scientist who cloned Dolly, tells. Following the publicity his experiment generated, he received a phone call from a woman whose two-year-old daughter had died of leukemia four days before. She wanted a copy of her daughter. As a man with three children himself, he said, "I have a suspicion that if we could do it, we would: we'd wave the magic wand and have the child back." But even if human cloning became safe and possible, he said, it will never give scientists that sort of magic wand. What cloning a dead child would do would be instead to make a new, different individual, who may well grow in a slightly different way. And this, he thought, would be not be fair to the new person, who would grow up constantly measured against an impossible template. "It would probably be an unreasonable pressure to copy a child under those circumstances."

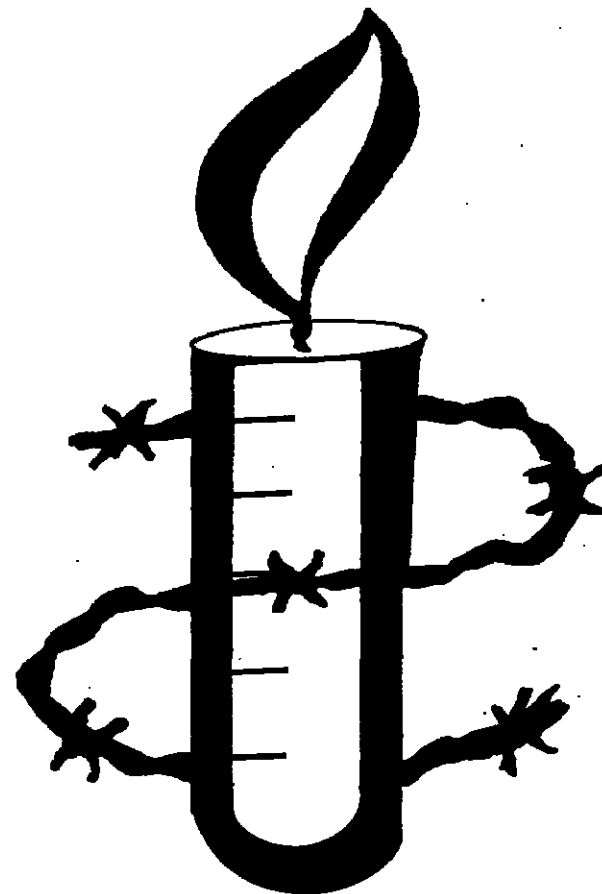
He made these remarks at Oxford, during his contribution to a series of lectures on biology and human rights. Jonathan Glover, whose turn it is to lecture tonight, agrees that the link between genetics and human rights is subtle. "Much of the development of ethics since *Brave New World* was published has been to ask why we are affronted by that future, and how to defend our revulsion from it." Biological determinism, the doctrine that we are shaped by our genes, is obvious nonsense, he says. The deeper problem is whether we are entirely conditioned by the interplay of our genes and our environment, and so could be moulded to taste if both were controlled. "Aldous Huxley was a genius and saw this. Since then we have come further than the very crude forms of utilitarianism that ruled in

Brave New World, in which people were simply after pleasure. We have realised that people value variety, self-determination, and the chance to shape their own lives, too."

The pursuit of autonomy for its own sake may lead away from *Brave New World*. It will not take us to utopia. The biggest theme that has emerged in the course of these Amnesty lectures is that any threat to human rights posed by biological technology comes from an entirely new direction. Not all the speakers would agree with Wilmut that an injustice would be committed against a child if it had been produced as a clone of a dead sibling. But all would agree that it is not the state which threatens to use these techniques dangerously, but rather individuals acting within the free market. The classic example of state abuse of reproductive technology has been the campaigns of abortion and forced sterilisation carried out in China and parts of India. In democratic India, revulsion against the campaign helped to bring down one of Indira Gandhi's governments, and compulsory sterilisation has long since ended there. But in its place has come the widespread selective abortion of female foetuses, simply because

fatal, which among other things causes the sufferer to lose the distinction between his body and the outside world, so that he gnaws continuously at his own lips and fingers and will, if not prevented, eat them.

It is difficult to suppose that even the most ardent pro-lifers, confronted with the reality of such a child's fate, would not suppose it were bet-



race or the nation as the unit which Darwinism shapes."

It is true that parents picking and choosing among their potential children on the basis of their individual genes is clearly different from picking and choosing among whole population groups. But there is one case where the free market practice might intersect: sexual

of homosexual disposition will be detectable in the womb. What should society expect of parents then? Should it prohibit the tests that make such decisions possible? Should it demand that parents bring up a child whose sexual orientation they find repulsive or whom they believe will be condemned to a life of unhappiness and isolation because of his condition? Such a belief could easily become a self-fulfilling prophecy in a society where abortion on grounds of sexual preference became established: the smaller a minority gays formed, the more miserable their lives might become.

These are not questions to which any obvious or easy answer presents itself. They throw upside down the normal order of things in which Amnesty members find themselves protecting, or trying to protect, individuals from wicked governments. The questions raised by reproductive ethics demand that governments curb the actions of wicked individuals. They may even demand that government curb the actions of good people acting inside wicked systems. After 40 years of struggling against totalitarianisms, human rights might have to take on the market next.

Questions raised by reproductive ethics may demand that governments curb the actions of good people acting inside wicked systems

they would, if born, be girls.

That kind of abortion is about as crude as reproductive technology can get. Further developments may make it possible to discriminate among embryos on the basis of much finer distinctions. Some of them are uncontroversial, except to the sort of absolutists who believe that all embryonic life must at all costs be preserved. Jonathan Glover, a philosopher who is director of the Centre of Medical Law and Ethics at King's College London, will argue in his lecture tonight that there are some rare diseases so horrible that an early abortion would be acting in the interests of the potential child, saving it from a short lifetime filled with pain. There is, for example, a condition called Lesch-Nyhan syndrome, invariably

ter for it not to have been born. But such clear-cut cases are few. More common conditions such as Down's syndrome are much harder to judge. If society regards the presence of such a disease as an acceptable reason for aborting a foetus, this makes it harder to preserve equality of respect for those already born. One might argue that their human worth, if not their human rights, has been diminished.

Nonetheless, the abortion of Down's syndrome foetuses is very different from Social Darwinism, or from Nazi eugenics, to which it is sometimes compared. "I get increasingly irritated by the facile use of the Nazi case in these debates. The modern idea of the gene as the unit of survival is very different from their belief in the

preference. If some parents will abort a foetus just for being a female, it seems clear that some, given the opportunity, would do the same if tests suggested their child would otherwise be gay. Now, such tests may never be invented. It is extraordinarily unlikely that the whole spectrum of behaviours and affections clumped together as "gay" are all determined by the same factors, or that that all or even most of these determining factors operate in the womb. But it is at least possible that some do, and that within 50 years some cas-

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**KATHY
MARKS**
ON A LEGAL
HOTCHPOTCH

The European Court was quite explicit in its ruling yesterday on a lesbian railway clerk who wants a concessionary travel pass for her girlfriend. European law does not protect homosexuals from discrimination at work, it said, and it is up to legislators in member states to keep pace with changing sexual mores.

Gay men and women had pinned their hopes on victory for Lisa Grant, which would have given them equal rights to pensions and other employment-related benefits. Now they must look to Westminster to reform the domestic statutes that treat them as second-class citizens in the workplace.

But it is not only civil law that fails to reflect the extent to

which social attitudes towards homosexuality have evolved over the past three decades. The criminal law is also behind the times. This coming Friday, seven men could be sent to prison for up to five years by a judge in Bolton, Greater Manchester, for participating in group sex in a private home.

The case, which was prosecuted with a righteous zeal reminiscent of the 1950s, is a stark reminder of the existence of criminal legislation that singles gay men out for punitive treatment. All the Bolton defendants were over the age of consent, except one who was six months short of 18, and all were fully consenting. The statute that they fell foul of was the 1967 Sexual Offences Act, which decriminalised homosexual acts in private but restricted privacy to circumstances in which only two people are present. They were convicted on the basis of home videos seized by police.

It must have come as a cruel irony to these men to learn about a sado-masochistic sex party raided by police in a club in Bolton a week after their trial. Officers only stayed long enough to ascertain that it was a private function, for straight guests only.

Thus events within a short period in a small northern town have neatly encapsulated one of the glaring absurdities of the pe-

nal code, which gives its blessing to orgies involving people of the opposite sex – and, incidentally, lesbians – but brings the full force of the law down on like-minded gay men.

But it is not only the curious definition of privacy which would have to be abolished for homosexuals to be treated as equals before the criminal law. Hundreds of gay men are still prosecuted every year for ar-

The penal code gives its blessing to orgies involving people of the opposite sex, but cracks down on homosexuals

chaic offences for which there is no heterosexual equivalent.

Several of the Bolton men, for instance, were convicted of gross indecency, the crime that landed Oscar Wilde in Reading Gaol. Gross indecency, first outlawed in 1885, became the classic offence used to charge men who engaged in "cottage" sex. The Mayor of Burnley was among those charged with gross indecency last year after police lay in wait for him in a public toilet. Then there is the quaintly-phrased crime of "soliciting for an immoral purpose", which dates back to the Vagrancy Act of 1898 and remains on the statute books although the "im-

moral purpose" – sex between men – has long been legal. It does not relate to prostitution, but to men who "cruise" for partners in public places.

If these two offences, both of which criminalise consenting sex between adults, were scrapped, the precarious legal position of gay men would be transformed. (The 1533 buggery law could be repealed, too, since anal intercourse is now le-

gal for everyone and rape legislation has been extended to cover assaults on men.)

These reforms would not give men a licence to engage in flagrant displays of sexual behaviour in public. As pointed out by Martin Bowley QC, chairman of a working party that has produced a consultation paper on changes to this area of law, offensive conduct could be adequately dealt with under an amended Public Order Act. Under the new Act, such behaviour would be treated as a public nuisance rather than a sexual crime, and a member of the public would have to see and be offended by

it for a prosecution to be brought. Currently, only a police officer needs to witness it.

The problem of tinkering with existing legislation, though, is that it would prolong the piecemeal approach of the past 100 years which has resulted in a legal hotchpotch of anomalies and contradictions. It would be far better to introduce a new sexual offences law that, instead of distilling the values of the Victorian Age and 1950s Middle England, mirrors the attitudes of a modern society. This new law should be based on the principle of equality of sexuality which (given that the age of consent is almost certain to be equalised at 16 later this year) is hardly a controversial approach.

But for this to happen, there would need to be a comprehensive review of the legislation, a task that has not been undertaken since 1957, when the Wolfenden committee published the report that led to the 1967 Act. When wise men and women finally do put their heads together, they should consider not just inequities in the law, but discriminatory enforcement and sentencing. When a couple had sex in broad daylight on the bonnet of a car at Heathrow Airport last year, for instance, it was regarded as rather amusing and they received a conditional discharge. Contrast that with

the substantial fines that are regularly meted out to men arrested in the middle of the night.

Sexual law reform is never high on the political agenda, but it would be an honourable government that resolved to tackle it. And during the last age of consent debate in 1994, Tony Blair spoke passionately in favour of equality of sexuality. A new statute should have three aims: to protect minors, to uphold public decency and to provide sanctions for rape and sexual assault. Our legislators should be quite clear in their minds that the law's proper function in this area is not to enforce a pattern of morality, but to protect vulnerable members of society.

The philosophy that the law has no place in the bedrooms of consenting adults was, in fact, accepted by the Wolfenden committee – wrecking amendments to the 1967 bill created the restrictive privacy clause. Had the report been properly implemented, the Bolton case could never have been brought. The Crown Prosecution Service, in a letter justifying the decision to press charges against the seven men, pointed out that Parliament "still draws a distinction between heterosexual and homosexual acts". This distinction has never been appropriate or just; but in 1998, it is indefensible.

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FINANCIAL JOURNAL OF THE YEAR

DTI set to raise limit on overseas holdings in BAe and Rolls

By Chris Godsmark
Business Correspondent

THE GOVERNMENT is poised to raise the limits on overseas shareholdings in British Aerospace and Rolls-Royce, a move likely to boost shares in both companies.

After longer than expected discussions, the Department of Trade and Industry is understood to have agreed to an increase in the foreign ownership ceiling from 29.5 per cent to 49.5 per cent. The decision by ministers follows a joint approach by Sir

Richard Evans, BAe's chief executive, and Sir Ralph Robins, Rolls-Royce's chairman, to Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade.

A British Aerospace spokesman said: "We are making good progress on the matter and look forward to an early response." John Battle, the Industry Minister, confirmed the companies' request in a written Commons answer last month. He said the DTI hoped to make an announcement "relatively soon".

Yesterday, speculation about the move increased in the City after BAe

said 29.39 per cent of its shares were in foreign hands, just short of the current limit set at privatisation. The identical ceiling for Rolls-Royce has twice been breached, which meant the last overseas investor to buy stock had to sell it back into the market.

The request for a raised foreign shareholding of just below 50 per cent was a compromise. BAe had preferred to see the limit disappear altogether, but Rolls-Royce was concerned that a ceiling of more than 50 per cent would make the company a clear takeover target, possibly

from a US predator. However, the Treasury had held up the agreement during heated discussions over BAe's request for a government loan to fund the development of a new range of Airbus aircraft.

Earlier this month the DTI sanctioned £123m of launch aid for the stretched version of the A340. BAe will build the enlarged wings for the plane, which challenges older versions of the Boeing 747, but had warned it could shift work on parts of the programme abroad if the Government failed to back the project.

The Prime Minister, Tony Blair, is thought to have intervened in the discussions, overruling reservations from Gordon Brown, the Chancellor. One source said the Treasury had temporarily "set on" the foreign ownership issue during the launch aid negotiations.

Analysts yesterday forecast that foreign investors would quickly move to increase their holdings in BAe and Rolls-Royce. The agreement could also open the way for partnerships with overseas investors. The new limits involve changing the articles of

association and need to be approved at annual shareholders' meetings. Brian Newman, of the brokers Henderson Crosthwaite, said dealers had been prevented from satisfying strong pent-up demand for shares from overseas institutions.

"We expect the release of this demand will increase the proportion of shares in BAe and Rolls-Royce held by overseas investors to more than 40 per cent by the end of the year and boost the share-price performance of both companies." Shares in British Aerospace closed yesterday

at 1790p, up 15p, while Rolls-Royce shares fell 0.75p to 203.5p. Meanwhile, Smiths Industries, the aerospace company, has won orders worth \$50m (£30m) to supply Boeing with electronics for its 767 jetliner and to supply the US Navy with flight recorders for military aircraft.

The orders are the latest for Smiths in the midst of a world-wide resurgence in the aerospace industry. Strong economies have prevented steeper declines in defence spending and airlines are using record profits to order more aircraft.

FTSE 100 hits peak on record Budget surplus

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

HOPES that Gordon Brown, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, will introduce his promised 10p starting rate of income tax and reduce National Insurance contributions for the low-paid in next month's Budget received a big boost yesterday from news of record income tax payments last month, thanks in part to the introduction of self-assessment.

The Government made the highest-ever monthly repayment of the national debt in January. The surplus of revenues over spending amounted to £10.4bn, compared with £5.7bn in the same month last year.

The Chancellor should easily beat his £9.5bn target for government borrowing in 1997/98, City experts predicted.

The unexpected tax bonanza in January led Malcolm Bruce, the Liberal Democrat Treasury spokesman, to accuse Mr Brown of building up a "war chest" of cash in time for the next general election.

"These figures prove that the Chancellor has money available to invest in schools and hospitals if only he is willing to end his dogmatic adherence to Tory spending plans," he said.

But the City welcomed the news. The feelgood factor, along with a rebound in Asian stock markets, merger mania and a buoyant start on Wall Street, helped the FTSE 100 index climb almost 90 points to reach 5,709.5, a new all-time high.

The surprise figures also boosted gilts, with the yield on 10-year government stocks declining to 5.89 per cent, the lowest for 30 years.

Simon Briscoe at Nikko Europe said: "In an era of low inflation and at this stage in the business cycle, the Government should be repaying debt."

David Bloom at HSBC James Capel said the Govern-

ment's new system of rules for prudent finances was already proving its worth.

Almost all the analysts who monitor the state of the Government's finances now expect the figure for the public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR) this financial year to turn out lower than the target, with most forecasts in the £6bn to £9bn range. This would be the best result since 1991 - and still leave the Chancellor scope to finance some of his tax pledges.

The front-runners are a reduction in national insurance contributions for low earners and the introduction of a 10p starting rate of income tax.

January normally brings a big repayment of government debt because corporation tax receipts have, in the past, been clustered in that month and October. However, the surprise this time around came from high income tax receipts.

This was partly due to the introduction of self-assessment, which reduced revenues in December but boosted them in January by around £2bn. Total income tax revenues were £11.8bn, more than twice December's level and more than £3bn higher than in January 1997.

Allowing for that, tax revenues were still more buoyant than expected in the latest month but just below the Treasury's target for the year to date. Total receipts have grown by just over 7 per cent in the first 10 months of the financial year, compared with the 8.1 per cent forecast.

The underlying reason for the improvement in the PSBR as a whole has been tough control of spending by Whitehall departments. This was lower than a year earlier, whereas the departmental spending plans the Chancellor adopted from his predecessor allowed for a 1.7 per cent increase for the year.



Record receipts: The introduction of self-assessment boosted income-tax revenues in January Photograph: Chris Watt

Beckett admits pound is hurting

THE GOVERNMENT last night acknowledged the impact the strength of sterling was having on industry, but did not hold out a hint of Government intervention, saying business should concentrate on "trades that depend less on price and more on quality".

Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, said she understood why firms found it difficult to deal with the pound's sharp rise against continental currencies in a short period of time. "I know that the Bank of England is fully aware of the circumstances of manufacturers, and of the problems exporters are having to deal with," Mrs Beckett said.

"The judgement they are now charged to make each month cannot be easy, but we must all remember that they have to take a view across the whole economy, not just a part, even as important a part as manufacturing."

Drugs giant set to reveal merger details next month

By Lea Paterson

SMITHKLINE Beecham yesterday signalled that its blockbuster £100bn-plus merger with Glaxo Wellcome, designed to create the biggest drugs company in the world, was on track.

The two groups will unveil their merger plans early next month.

In his first comments since talks between the two drugs giants were announced last month, Jan Leschly, SmithKline's chief executive, said yesterday: "The proposed merger... represents a compelling strategic opportunity for both companies to enhance their industrial position and enhance shareholder value."

He insisted that the merger was a way of maximising the effectiveness of research and development spending, a key issue facing pharmaceutical companies in an increasingly competitive market.

Mr Leschly also indicated that the combined group was likely to keep its clinical services arm, despite speculation that it could have been a casualty of the merger. The division recovered

strongly in 1997. SmithKline dismissed criticism of its acquisition of DPS, its troubled pharmacy benefit manager. And Mr Leschly insisted it made a useful contribution to the group and would continue to do so for years to come.

Analysts said yesterday that SmithKline was likely to sell its nutritional division, which makes Ribena and Lucozade, as a result of the merger. However, SmithKline refused to be drawn on further details.

Mr Leschly's comments came as SmithKline unveiled a 7 per cent rise in 1997 pre-tax profits to £1.65bn at what is likely to be its last annual results presentation as an independent group. Ignoring the strength of the pound, which wiped £157m off earnings, profits rose 17 per cent.

This strong trading performance was driven by a jump in profits from its pharmaceutical division. Sales of Serenol, its anti-depressant which is an alternative to Prozac and trades as Serenol in the US, rose 36 per cent. Augmentin, an antibiotic, and its vaccine portfolio also



Jan Leschly: Broke silence on Glaxo deal yesterday

showed good sales growth.

Meanwhile, a 17 per cent rise in profits at its consumer healthcare division was driven by a sharp rise in sales of Aquafresh toothbrushes and tooth pastes. Nicorette patches and chewing gum, designed to help smokers kick the habit, have also shown rapid expansion with annual sales reaching £273m. A string of new drugs contributed to the profits rise and SmithKline increased its research and development expenditure by 17 per cent to £841m.

SmithKline's shares rose 2p to 837p. Glaxo's shares rose 22p to 1961p.

Barclays shares slide as merger plans stay vague

By Chris Godsmark

Shares in Barclays, the banking group, sank 6 per cent yesterday as the City expressed its disappointment at a lacklustre set of full-year results and the absence of positive news on merger plans.

News of a £500m share buy-back programme failed to cheer analysts, many of whom had been hoping for a bullish statement on future strategy.

But although Martin Taylor, Barclays' chief executive, said the case for further rationalisation was "compelling", he refused to comment specifically on the identity of possible merger partners.

One banking analyst said: "Consolidation rumours have driven this share price up, and if [Mr Taylor] doesn't say anything positive on consolidation soon, people are going to get a bit worried."

Persistent takeover rumours - in particular, speculation about a possible link-up with NatWest - have sent Barclays' share price soaring in recent months. Since the autumn, shares have risen by more than a third. But yesterday they shed 118p to close at 1813p.

Barclays' pre-tax profit for the year to December slumped

26 per cent to £1.7bn - lower than expected - prompting unfavourable comparisons with rival Lloyds TSB, which last week unveiled record 1997 profits of £3.2bn.

The sell-off of parts of BZW, Barclays' former investment banking arm, was the main reason for the profit fall. Two weeks ago, the bank admitted that it would take a £688m hit following the sale of its equity and corporate advisory businesses.

The City had already been told about the BZW figures, but was surprised yesterday by the size of some other costs.

The bank has set aside an additional £25m to cover compensation for non-priority cases in the pensions mis-selling scandal. It also said yesterday preparations for EMU and the year 2000 would cost a total of £400m.

If the UK enters EMU on a retail basis, where the currency will be used on the high street, Barclays will incur a further £300m in costs as cash machines and other types of technology are changed.

Barclays took the opportunity yesterday to spell out its degree of exposure to Asia. The bank has an exposure of £1.2bn to Korea, Indonesia and Thai-

land, 15 per cent of which is in the corporate sector. Barclays has made an additional provision of £45m to cover the increased risk of default in Asia.

When questioned about the possibility of mergers in the banking industry, Mr Taylor reiterated his view on rationalisation in the sector.

He said: "I think the arguments for banking consolidation in the next decade are absolutely compelling. There is no doubt at all that we'll see a substantial reduction in the number of international banks." Although he expected there would be cross-border mergers, "you tend to get domestic consolidation first, for all sorts of reasons".

But Mr Taylor would not be drawn into a discussion of likely merger partners for Barclays, although he admitted "cultural incompatibility" could destroy shareholder value.

Mr Taylor also provided details of Barclays' new structure, which will come into effect on April 1. The bank is to be reorganised into four groups: Retail Financial Services, Corporate Banking, Barclays Global Investors, and Barclays Capital, the remnants of BZW.

Indonesia sacks bank chief in currency row

THE ASIAN crisis showed no signs of abating yesterday as Indonesia fired the governor of its central bank, and indicated it was moving ahead to peg the rupiah to another currency even as mounting objections made it likely the plan would lack the credibility it needed to succeed.

President Suharto gave no reason for dismissing Bank Indonesia governor Soedradjat Djiwandono. He replaced him with Sjahril Sabirin, a central bank director seen to lean favourably towards a so-called currency board. Mr Soedradjat was let go because "he opposed the currency peg, and it's a sign that Suharto is very much ready to implement the peg," said one currency strategist.

However, Steve Hanke, the Johns Hopkins University economist advising Indonesia on the currency board, shrugged off international objections, saying they were misplaced. "It's quite a mystery what's going on," he said. Mr Hanke dismissed op-

position from the International Monetary Fund, the US and the European Union, saying the peg would stabilise the rupiah and help Indonesia meet the reform requirements under the IMF's \$40bn (£24.4bn) bailout.

His comments pulled up the rupiah, which recovered to 9,450 to the dollar after falling 0.5 per cent earlier in the day.

Meanwhile, the UK government has launched an initiative to increase the amount of European technical assistance available to the troubled Asian economies. The initiative, which will focus on financial sector restructuring, is being developed in the run up to the ASEM 2 Summit on 3-4 April, when Asian and European leaders meet in London.

The Treasury said Gordon Brown, the Chancellor, and Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development, discussed their ideas with Jim Wolfensohn, World Bank President, when they met yesterday.

STOCK MARKETS

Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5709.50	89.60	1.58	5675.10	4189.10	3.18
FTSE 250	5007.80	15.90	0.32	4988.90	3354.20	3.19
FTSE 350	2715.10	36.30	1.35	2658.20	2075.70	3.18
FTSE All Share	2642.95	33.57	1.28	2623.83	2056.07	3.17
FTSE SmallCap	2429.50	4.70	0.15	2427.60	2182.10	2.98
FTSE AIM	1395.40	4.70	0.34	1346.60	1225.20	3.41
FTSE Funding	1091.90	-0.20	-0.02	1138.00	885.90	0.97
Dow Jones	8414.89	44.59	0.53	8390.27	6356.78	1.65
Nikkei	16790.71	15.19	0.09	20910.79	14488.21	0.91
Hang Seng	10282.03	108.00	1.07	16820.31	7909.19	3.84
Dax	4602.40	81.78	1.81	4597.29	3171.05	1.75

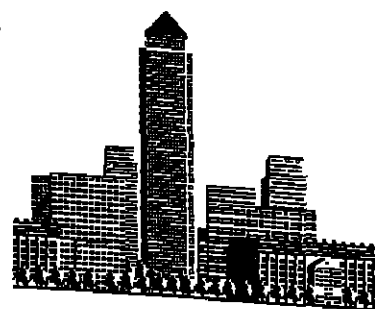
INTEREST RATES

Short sterling	UK 10 year gilt	US long bond
1.25%	5.89%	5.89%
1.25%	5.89%	5.89%
1.25%	5.89%	5.89%
1.25%	5.89%	5.89%
1.25%	5.89%	5.89%
1.25%	5.89%	5.89%
1.25%	5.89%	5.89%
1.25%	5.89%	5.89%
1.25%	5.89%	5.89%
1.25%	5.89%	5.89%

CURRENCIES

\$/£	DM/£	¥/£
1.6311	1.6170	161.70
1.6311	1.6170	161.70
1.6311	1.6170	161.70
1.6311	1.6170	161.70
1.6311	1.6170	161.70
1.6311	1.6170	161.70
1.6311	1.6170	161.70
1.6311	1.6170	161.70
1.6311	1.6170	161.70
1.6311	1.6170	161.70

HAGGAS			
JOHN HAGGAS PLC			
INTERIM STATEMENT			
Interim results for the 6 months to	6 months to	Year to	
31.12.97	31.12.96	30.06.97	
£'000	£'000	£'000	
Net turnover	22,340	21,241	43,787
Profit before taxation	703	1,307	2,222
Taxation	(232)	(431)	(685)
Profit attributable to shareholders	471	876	1,537
Interim dividend	(332)	(331)	(995)
Retained profit	139	545	542
Earnings per share	2.1p	4.0p	7.0p
DIVIDEND			
An interim dividend of 1.5p per share will be paid on the 23rd April 1998 to shareholders registered on 13th March 1998			



OUTLOOK ON CONSOLIDATION IN HIGH STREET BANKS AND THE GOOD NEWS ON GOVERNMENT FINANCES

Good news. If Martin Taylor, chief executive of Barclays, gets his way, National Insurance will be reformed in such a way in the Budget as to help create lots of low paid, unskilled jobs and provide the incentive to unemployed people to fill them.

Bad news. If Martin Taylor gets his way, Barclays will soon be allowed to merge with National Westminster Bank, destroying 20,000 jobs in the process, many of them low paid and unskilled. Margaret Beckett doesn't much like the idea, and nor does Gordon Brown, if the truth be known, but Mr Taylor is reported to be working on them.

Is there not just the faintest hint of a difference between what Mr Taylor preaches and what he practices? Next month, Mr Taylor will be producing a review for the Government on reform of the tax and benefit system - again, all designed to get people off benefit and into work. Indeed, this is to be the central theme of the Budget itself. And it is Mr Taylor who has been advising Gordon Brown on it all. Meanwhile, back in the day job, Mr Taylor is shedding labour as fast as he can sign the redundancy cheques.

How does he manage to sleep at night? To be fair on Mr Taylor, there's nothing wrong or unreasonable with aspiring both to public-interest tax and benefit reform while at the same time pursuing the supposed competitive needs of his own business. The problem is that the two things pull in different directions.

Getting the long term unemployed back into work requires more than reform

of tax and benefits. It also requires job creation and since the long term unemployed tend to be unskilled, that means primarily at the lower end of the pay scale. Unfortunately, this is also where the extreme competitive pressures placed on companies by the process of globalisation and technological advance are at their most brutal.

With his heart Mr Taylor wants to create more jobs for the benefit-dependent to fill. Reality is meanwhile destroying them at breakneck speed. So with his head, Mr Taylor is ensuring that he keeps his bank competitive by playing the fullest possible part in the process.

Growth in service sector activities like catering and leisure is to some extent easing the pain but the big demand in developed economies these days is for skilled, knowledge-based labour. Even Mr Taylor is being forced to recruit IT specialists as fast as he is shedding his clerks, as amply demonstrated by the big jump in underlying costs that Barclays recorded last year. As fast as Barclays cuts its labour and other overheads, it is forced to give it all back on extra IT spending. Outgoings on the millennium bug and preparations for the single currency come on top.

Though he was refusing to say anything about it yesterday, Mr Taylor wants to take the process of change: much, much further. He wants to merge with NatWest to create a national champion capable of punching its weight in Europe and beyond. If we don't do this, his emissaries claim, we'll get left behind. Europe after the advent of the single currency will become the

plaything of a small number of dominant national players, they argue.

Think of Britain now, with its relatively small number of retail banks, some of them with very high market shares. That's what the European market will look like 10, 20 years from now, the argument goes. Those countries that prevent this process of consolidation from happening will end up with their banking market overrun by those who do.

Are ministers going to buy this? Are they really prepared to allow big job cutting mergers even as they are trying to promote policies that create employment and force the benefit dependent back to work? Tony Blair seems to have become so beholden to the forces of big business that anything seems possible. Who knows, Mr Taylor may even be right. It may indeed be the case that a small number of dominant national players are more capable of competing abroad than a larger number of less dominant ones.

But is such hegemony also capable of creating a more prosperous, vibrant and competitive national economy? All the evidence is the other way. Think back 15 years to the overpriced, low quality service that was the British Telecom monopoly. Dismantling it has been a long and hard fought process but few dispute that the end result has been anything other than overwhelmingly positive. We now have Europe's most competitive telecommunications market. That's been good both for jobs in telecommunications and related services, and for the general competi-

tiveness of the British economy. Do we really want to go the other way in banking?

The stock market may have been disappointed by Barclays' profits yesterday but in fact retail banking profits are now reaching levels which everyone else can legitimately regard as excessive. The way for policymakers to address such excess is not through the crude mechanism of a windfall tax, but by protecting and nurturing a properly competitive environment. Britain has too few banks, not too many. Mr Taylor is a persuasive character but in the end good economics and sound judgement will win the day. Maybe.

Big question for the Iron Chancellor

The news on the government's finances has been so good it is starting to seem too good to be true. Happy is the Chancellor who meets his spending targets without apparent difficulty, can afford to pay for some cherished Budget giveaways like the 10p starting rate of income tax, and can still predict a big enough improvement in the borrowing requirement that the Liberal Democrats, Britain's last tax-and-spend party, can accuse him of building up a war chest for the next election.

In fact the war chest is a red herring, diverting attention from the fact that the Labour Government inherited a truly awful position from the Tories. The national debt has doubled under John Major's pre-

iership, and the government is still borrowing billions of pounds at a stage of the economic cycle when it should be in surplus. The time to talk about war chests is when the surplus is actually in the bag.

For the news probably is too good to be true, despite Gordon Brown's genuine and welcome commitment to prudent fiscal management. One worry is what will happen to tax revenues as the economy slows down. The other serious question mark hangs over the spending side of the equation. While there can be little doubt that the Chancellor has an iron grip over expenditure by Whitehall, the Treasury's control over local authority spending is still far from secure. There are big pressures in both education and public sector pay, much of which falls under local authorities. There are indeed signs in the emergence of a gap between the spending recorded in the monthly PSBR figures and much higher expenditure recorded in the quarterly national accounts figures, that control of non-departmental spending has already weakened since 1 May.

There is no reason for alarmism. Within a few months Labour has proved to be better than the Conservatives at running the public purse. But even this Iron Chancellor can not eliminate the big question that lies behind all others when it comes to Government spending: how do we pay for the improvements in public services so many people want when voters are so resistant to higher taxes? The Chancellor is unlikely to have the answer when he gets up to deliver his Budget speech on 17 March.

Grade in line for £1m a year as chairman at First Leisure

By Andrew Yates

MICHAEL GRADE, the outspoken former head of Channel 4, could receive more than £1.1m a year in his new role as chairman of First Leisure, it was revealed yesterday. Mr Grade, who joined the group last June, is to receive a basic salary of £510,000 a year. On top of that he could earn up to £625,000 under a special tailor-made long-term incentive plan.

Michael Payne, the group's managing director, also controversially received a £79,000 bonus for agreeing a new three-year contract, which directly flouts corporate governance guidelines. Mr Payne was previously on a 12-month contract, in line with recommended practice. Mr Payne also received a 20 per cent pay rise, collecting a total of £315,000 in 1997 compared with £188,000 the previous year.

First Leisure's annual report also revealed that John Conlan, the group's former chief executive who left in the wake of Mr

Grade's arrival, received a total pay-off of £1.5m. Nick Tamblin, who used to head up the group's bingo and health and fitness division, received a total of £459,000 after also leaving the group abruptly last June.

The directors' bonanzas come against the background of dwindling profits and a slump in the share price. Pre-tax profits for the year to October fell to £41.5m (£42.1m). Its shares have fallen by almost a fifth to 303.5p over the last 12 months, underperforming the market by more than 30 per cent.

Institutional shareholders expressed concern at the revelations. One said: "A salary of over £500,000 looks a lot for a company of First Leisure's size. Maybe he needs the money to keep him in cigars" - a reference to Mr Grade's trademark accessory. Another said: "This bonus for extending the contract looks unjustified."

Mr Grade has also been issued with 651,757 share options which can be exercised at 313p a share. Mr Tamblin retains op-

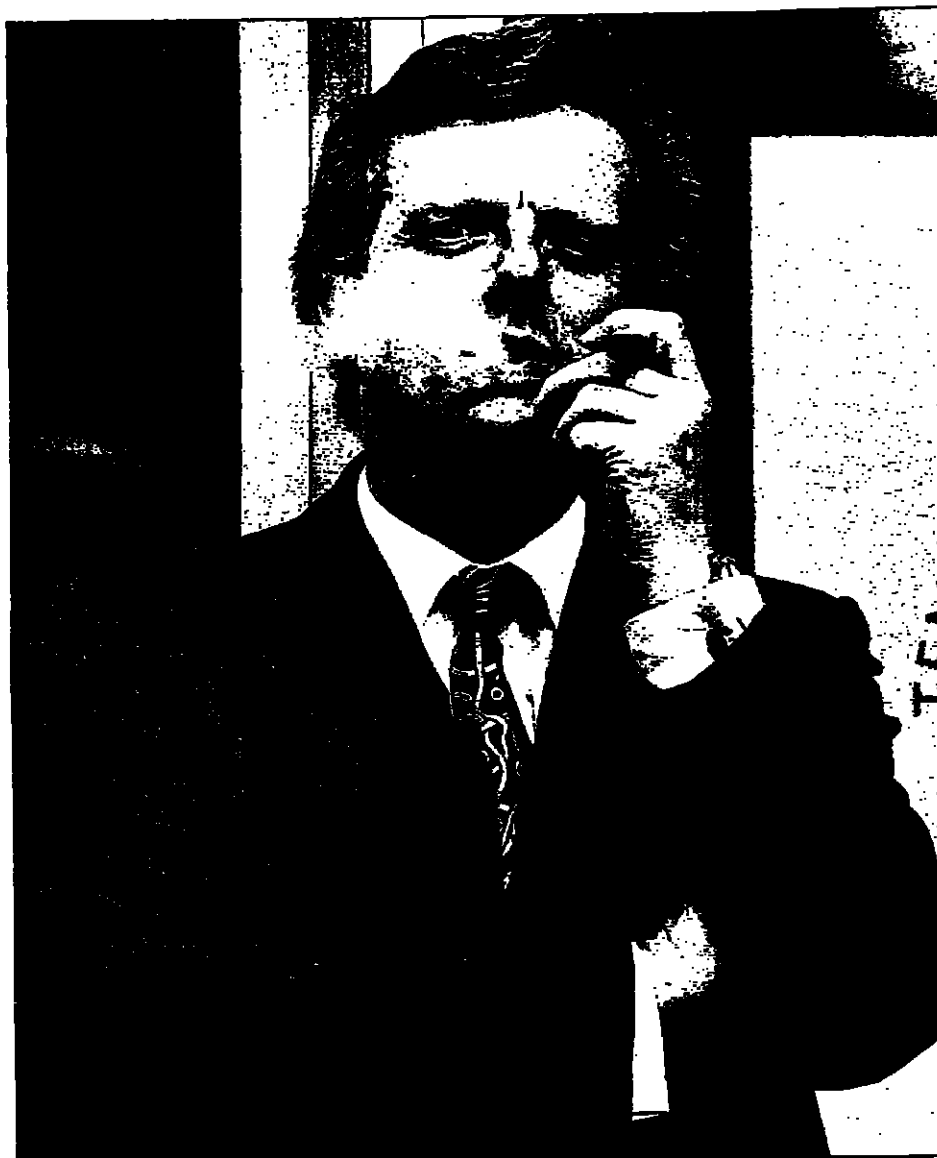
tions over more than 150,000 shares despite his pay-off.

First Leisure said yesterday that it wanted to give Mr Payne, who is 60-years old, a three-year contract to ensure he remained with the group. "This was an exceptional case. We wanted to prevent him from moving to a competitor or retiring," said a spokesman.

First Leisure also claimed that Mr Grade's total salary had not increased since he was working with Channel 4. He received £450,000 at Channel 4 as well as £60,000 a year in his former role as non-executive director of First Leisure.

The group refused to comment on what criteria Mr Grade would have to meet to receive his maximum annual bonus. However, a spokesman said it would be more demanding than conditions imposed on John Conlan.

Mr Payne and Graham Coles, the group's finance director, both made £86,000 from the group's long-term incentive plan last year.



Incentives: Michael Grade could earn up to £625,000 a year through a tailored L-tip

Christie's board considers £500m consortium offer

THE BOARD of Christie's International, the auction house, was understood to be locked in a meeting last night discussing a £500m offer from a consortium of investors led by SBC Warburg. It is understood that the investment bank, which has put together a group of wealthy individuals to make the approach, tabled a formal offer on Monday night. Warburg made its initial approach to Christie's before Christmas. Joe Lewis, the Bahamas-based businessman who owns 29.9 per cent of the company, will be the key to any deal.

Kwik Save name change

THE KWIK SAVE name could be retained for just 200-300 stores under the proposed £1.2bn merger agreement between Kwik Save and Somerfield. It is thought that almost 1,000 of the combined group's 1,400 supermarkets will trade under one national brand, which will be Somerfield. Around 200 would close, with the remainder trading under the Kwik Save format concentrating on a more focused discount concept. The Gateway and Food Giant formats would disappear completely.

Telefonica delays BT decision

TELEFONICA, Spain's dominant telephone company, yesterday postponed for a week a decision on whether to press ahead with an alliance with British Telecom. The Spanish group last year switched from an alliance with AT&T to sign an agreement with BT and its US partner MCI, but the deal collapsed with the failure of the BT-MCI merger. The original deal would have seen BT pay some £300m for a 2 per cent stake in Telefonica, with the Spanish group buying 1 per cent of BT.

Agreement on due diligence

VENTURE capitalists will from today only be able to sue accountants for limited sums in any dispute over due diligence work. A memorandum of understanding on liability capping brings to an end 15 months of talks prompted by the Big Six accountancy firms' agreement in October 1996 that venture capital due diligence work would be subject to standard terms. The British Venture Capital Association, which represents the leading firms in the field, responded by complaining to the Office of Fair Trading.

Warning on rail link

NOT building the Channel Tunnel Rail Link to St Pancras station would cost the taxpayer more than £1.4bn, Labour MPs were told yesterday. The figure, produced by Camden council, includes £900m worth of projected losses incurred by Eurostar by the year 2001.

Foreign & Colonial bans staff from its funds' boards

By Andrew Verity

FOREIGN & Colonial, the investment manager, yesterday silenced fierce criticism from the City by ordering all of its employees who are directors of client investment trusts to step down.

Seven employees, including James Ogilvy, the new chairman of Foreign & Colonial, will step down as non-executive directors of eight investment trusts run by the fund manager. No employee will be allowed to serve on an investment trust board while running its funds. Andrew Barker, a senior fund manager, will step down from the Foreign & Colonial Investment Trust, the £2.5bn flagship of which Kenneth Clarke, the former chancellor, is a director.

In an unusual move, F&C also said it would let investment trusts cut F&C's contract as fund manager from two years to one, without any compensation.

Robert Jenkins, who joined the fund manager as chief executive last month, said: "The initiative we announced today goes above and beyond what is currently considered best practice in the industry."

"The essence of the issue is the perception of a conflict [of interest] and the perception of potential wrongdoing that arises from dual responsibilities. We

are doing absolutely everything that could possibly be done within the limits of Foreign & Colonial's management."

F&C, which manages £4.5bn in client investment trusts, has been under attack for months from shareholders such as Hermes. Shareholders questioned whether a director could be impartial in judging the performance of a fund manager while also being an employee.

The battle came to a head last month when Hermes, the pension fund, and City of London, a fellow shareholder, voted to oust the entire board of F&C.

The board included F&C's former chairman, Michael Hart, who was replaced by Mr Ogilvy in January. Mr Hart now heads up the Association of Investment Trust Companies.

Shareholders of investment trusts were also concerned that fund managers often had two-year contracts, allowing them to claim compensation if they were ditched for performing badly.

The City yesterday welcomed the move as a big step forward in efforts to clean up the investment trust industry and called on others to follow. Shares in investment trusts run by F&C were all marked up by around 2 per cent each.

Royal Bank rules out higher price for Midlands

By Andrew Verity

ROYAL Bank of Scotland has ruled out the possibility of raising the offer price for Birmingham Midlands Building Society beyond a range of £605m to £630m, despite claims that it significantly undervalues the society.

Birmingham Midlands is facing renewed protests from policyholders angry that it is being sold at a "knock-down, bargain basement price" much lower than its likely market value. The society said the offer, made last August, valued the company at 12 times its earnings, while a spokesman for Royal Bank said the multiple was over 14.

But policyholders complain that the City now sees much greater value in societies which have converted to banks.

Northern Rock trades at a multiple of 24 times earnings while Halifax is at 30 times earnings.

Save Our Building Societies, a St Alban's-based lobby group, is aiming to gather 100 signatures of Birmingham Midlands members, enough to force a special meeting to discuss the bid. So far, the group has gathered 60 signatures.

The group also questions a part of the deal under which Mike Jackson, chief executive of Birmingham Midlands, will be offered a senior executive role within Royal Bank, including a seat on the bank's board of directors. John Leighfield, chairman of Birmingham Midlands, will also be offered a position.

Bob Goodall, a spokesman for the lobby group, said: "We believe the takeover is wrong

in itself. But, apart from that, is the price on offer seriously undervaluing Birmingham Midlands? We argue the society is worth a lot more than the bank is offering."

Mr Jackson said: "We are continually reviewing the stock market, and the prices in the banking sector, with our advisers. We are working towards achieving the top end of the agreed range and we have no current plans to seek to review the value with Royal Bank of Scotland." A spokesman added that Mr Jackson and Mr Leighfield had been absent when the board of the society voted on the offer from Royal Bank.

Royal Bank claimed market prices for banks are unusually high and Birmingham Midlands described valuations as "freakish". Both said there were

no plans to bring the bid further into line with the markets. "You are seeing a unique set of circumstances where the banks are significantly overvalued," a spokesman for Royal Bank said.

City analysts view the bid as low - even taking into account assurances given by Royal Bank that staff would keep their jobs for three years. "If I was a policyholder I would prefer to get more money for it," one leading analyst said.

On the basis that the offer price would be shared evenly between the 1 million policyholders at Birmingham Midlands, each can expect around £630 in cash or shares. If the society was sold on a valuation similar to other converted societies, it is believed that policyholders could expect up to twice as much.

Freeport plans £45m designer shopping village in Yorkshire

By Andrew Yates

FREEPORT Leisure, the property group, yesterday unveiled plans to build the biggest designer shopping and leisure village in Europe. The 30-acre retail development will be built near Pontefract in Yorkshire.

The new village will be on the site of the former Glass Houghton colliery and will cost £45m to build. It will include 250,000 square feet of retail space as well as bars and restaurants.

The development forms part of a grand plan to regenerate the area. Whitbread, the leisure giant, is understood to be planning

to build an indoor ski slope, a hotel and restaurants next door to Freeport Leisure's development. Together, the schemes could bring thousands of new jobs to the area.

Freeport Leisure revealed yesterday that it had cashed in on disappointing high-street sales in the run-up to Christmas. Shops were left with huge amounts of excess stock after Christmas which they were forced to off-load to Freeport Leisure at vast discounts. Customers have been able to pick up bargains on up-to-date fashion ranges. The group offers clothes from high-street retailers such as Next and Laura Ashley at half price.

This will be Freeport's fourth site and

it plans to open another three villages within the next few years. It has recently opened in Braintree, Essex, and is expanding its original site at Hornsea, north of Hull.

To fund the rapid expansion Freeport is likely to launch a rights issue in the near future and is considering forming joint ventures with other property groups. Freeport's shares reacted positively to the news, jumping 30.5p to 289.5p as it announced a rise in pre-tax profits to £1.4m (£1.02m).

Factory outlets and out-of-town retail villages have become extremely popular over the last few years, drawing customers from the high street with offers of cheap designer clothes.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Barclays (p)	- (-)	1.72m (2.31m)	74.4p (104.2p)	27.0p (31.5p)
Cheltenham Group (p)	£136.3m (238m)	£27.1m (22.3m)	48.9p (38.9p)	7.3p (8.6p)
Comptel Group (p)	86.6m (88.5m)	3.67m (1.7m)	9.0p (6.8p)	2.1p (1.8p)
Children's Britain (p)	8.4m (6.02m)	1.02m (0.828m)	1.02p (16.0p)	4.5p (1.8p)
Staghead Overseas Property (p)	£5.04m (5.97m)	0.608m (0.743m)	0.67p (7.28p)	0.15p
Freemantle Leisure (p)	3.98m (3.19m)	1.41m (1.02m)	5.05p (3.42p)	-
John Hargreaves (p)	22.3m (21.2m)	0.708m (1.31m)	2.1p (4.4p)	1.5p
Whitehouse (p)	- (-)	£56.2m (48.8m)	41.9p (36.3p)	15.3p
Law & Slater (p)	438.7m (420.4m)	38.2m (32.3m)	18.75p (26.6p)	15.9p (14.7p)
Morse & Rose (p)	12.15m (11.75m)	5.25m (5.14m)	17.6p (16.5p)	10.2p (9.7p)
Quarto Group (p)	81.8m (80.7m)	2.8m (7.8m)	7.2p (28.5p)	4.5p (8.0p)
Polysar Group (p)	36.4m (30.7m)	4.12m (3.5m)	7.9p (8.4p)	2.6p (2.5p)
Redwood (p)	97.5m (91.5m)	101.2m (56.5m)	12.8p (11.8p)	7.0p (6.5p)
Stadium Group (p)	80.7m (82.0m)	5.76m (4.71m)	15.0p (12.3p)	5.0p (4.3p)
WPP Group (p)	7.28m (7.08m)	177.4m (163.2m)	15.7p (13.7p)	1.43p (1.14p)

(p) - Profit (l) - Loss

TOURIST RATES

Australia (dollars)	2.3737	Italy (lira)	2.863
Austria (schillings)	20.30	Japan (yen)	203.57
Belgium (francs)	59.70	Malta (lira)	0.6286
Canada (\$)	2.3059	Netherlands (guilders)	3.2538
Cyprus (pounds)	0.8437	Norway (kroner)	12.13
Denmark (kroner)	11.08	Portugal (escudos)	244.03
Finland (markka)	8.8313	Spain (pesetas)	204.04
France (francs)	9.6717	South Africa (rand)	7.7531
Germany (marks)	2.8953	Sweden (kroner)	12.99
Greece (drachmas)	457.07	Switzerland (francs)	2.2587
Hong Kong (\$)	12.30	Turkey (lira)	355.87
Ireland (puns)	1.567	USA (\$)	1.6003

Source: Thomas Cook
Rates for indication purposes only

THE INVESTMENT COLUMN

EDITED BY ANDREW YATES

WPP looks for further growth

WPP is an object lesson in the virtues of bottom fishing. Although investors who backed Martin Sorrell's attempt to build an advertising empire by debt-funded acquisition in the late 1980s all but lost their shirts, those who got in when the future looked bleak have done extremely well. In seven years, the share price has risen elevenfold. Of course, Mr Sorrell, through his lucrative share scheme, has also pocketed a few bob.

As with all recovery stories, the trick is calling the point when the recovery is complete and the company starts performing in line with the usual ups and downs of its industry. Analysts have signalled that point several times in the past, and been surprised. Yesterday's results, which showed pre-tax profits rising 16 per cent to £177m last year, show that WPP is still improving. Knock out the effects of the strong pound, and profits were up 28 per cent. Operating margins improved by a full percentage point to 11.8 per cent.

Can it get any better? Mr Sorrell - who needs to get the WPP share price above 300p and keep it there for two months to receive his final tranche of shares - clearly thinks it can. He sees no reason why WPP should not make similar margins to competitors like Interpublic and Omnicom, which enjoy a return on sales of 13 to 15 per cent. So he is targeting another 1 percentage point margin improvement, to 13.3 per cent, this year.

Given that WPP is still picking up plenty of new business, that looks achievable. Mr Sorrell expects the global advertising market to grow by about 5 per cent in the coming year, and thinks WPP will take market share. Although Asian turmoil will dampen growth, Mr Sorrell believes those markets will prove lucrative in the long term.

Then there is WPP's cash flow. Large acquisitions are apparently too expensive, but the company spent £68m on a string of smaller deals last year, and is looking for more. Even so, there is enough left over for WPP to buy back £50m of its own shares this year - twice as much as it had originally planned to.

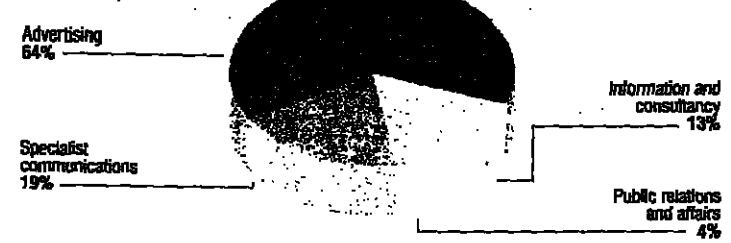
So where does this leave WPP shares, up 12.5p to 297.5p yesterday? Compared with their US peers, they look cheap. But, even taking a conservative assumption of 4 per cent revenue growth in future years and further slight margin gains, WPP's earnings

WPP: At a glance

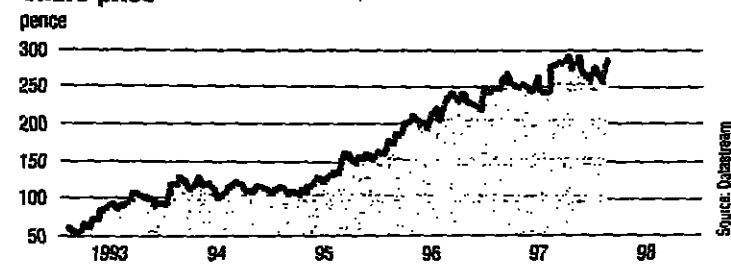
Market value: £2.19bn, share price 297.5p (+12.5p)

Five-year record	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Turnover (£bn)	6.03	6.01	6.55	7.08	7.29
Pre-tax profits (£m)	54	85	114	153	177
Earnings per share (p)	4.9	7.9	9.5	13.7	15.7
Dividends per share (p)	1.00	1.14	1.31	1.70	2.13

Operating Profit of total group, %



Share price



should grow at about 15 per cent a year. The WPP recovery may be over, but with the shares trading on a market rating they still look good value.

Sell-off plans fail to lift Alpha

SHARES in Alpha Airports, the airline catering group, have crashed landed in recent months. Yesterday's announcement that it had decided to get out of duty-free retailing failed to halt the fall. Its share price fell another 1.5p to 71p, almost half the 1994 flotation price of 140p when it was hived off from Forte.

Getting out of retailing makes sense. Threats to the future of duty-free at Heathrow and Gatwick spell trouble for the company.

However, the group shocked the

market by announcing a £14m hit to close kitchens at Heathrow and write down the value of its troubled catering business at Orly airport in Paris.

Kevin Abbott, the new chief executive, admits the credibility of the group is strained and is trying to do something about it. The proceeds of the retail business, perhaps £60m to £70m, will be poured back into airline catering and ground handling.

An expansion of cut-price airlines throughout Europe could also trigger opportunities. Alpha is already working for easyJet and is bidding for deals with GO, the new BA discount airline.

However, the catering market is still dogged by intense competition. And Sri Lanka apart, Alpha's experiences in Asia have not been happy. Alpha admitted yesterday it might pull out of a planned investment in Hong Kong at a cost of £1.2m.

Two potential purchasers are said to have shown interest in Alpha's retail division but no buyers have emerged so

far. And Mohamed Al Fayed, the Harrods boss who holds a 28 per cent stake in Alpha, has not as yet been tempted to buy up the rest, which may say something for its prospects.

Analysts forecast pre-tax profits of £29m, before the £14m write-off, with earnings likely to be flat the following year. That puts the shares on a prospective price-earnings ratio of 7, a sharp discount to the market. But given the uncertainties surrounding the group that rating looks justified.

Sedgwick figures reassure market

DOOM and gloom has surrounded the insurance broking market for the last few years but Sedgwick yesterday gave hope that there may be light at the end of the tunnel.

What used to be meat and drink to Sedgwick - commission income for arranging insurance for corporations - is beginning to look like crumbs from the corporate table. Many multinationals prefer to self-insure. Meanwhile, two giant American predators, Aon and Marsh & McLennan, are lying in wait.

Against that background, Sedgwick managed to increase underlying profits by an impressive 19 per cent. Although the strong pound restricted profits to £101.2m, or 6 per cent.

Sedgwick's strategy of shifting away from dwindling commission income to fees appears to be working. Noble Lowndes, the big UK benefit consultants, now makes up a quarter of the group's profits and last year saw a 14 per cent growth in income. Sedgwick has also proved adept at moving into emerging markets and also claims to have become the biggest insurance broker in Eastern Europe.

The illusive merger between Sedgwick and Willis Corroon remains just that. Sax Riley, the chairman of Sedgwick, points out that, as with accountancy mergers, clients may not always be happy. And Willis Corroon last week made it clear it was determined to remain independent.

Even so, Sedgwick should be able to continue to improve earnings and dividends at a decent rate. Its results pleased the market, causing its shares to rise 5p to 146p yesterday. Analysts forecast earnings per share rising from 12.8p to 13.4p this year, putting the company on a forward p/e ratio of under 11. With a yield of 4.8 per cent to underpin the price, the shares are beginning to look attractive.

PEOPLE & BUSINESS

JOHN WILLCOCK



TONY DYE, boss of UBS fund management arm PDM, flew out to Geneva recently to have a pow-wow with his opposite number Gary Brinson, Chicago-based boss of SBC Brinson, who has been appointed head of all institutional asset management in the newly merged investment bank.

After they'd had their little chat over "Kaffee und Kuchen", Mr Brinson offered his new underling a lift back. Mr Dye, of course, expected "a lift back" to mean a trip to Geneva airport in Mr Brinson's hire car. In the event the duo were walled to Luton airport in Mr Brinson's private jet. They do things so much better in Chicago....

Lord Fanshawe is retiring from the board of Sedgwick after 50 years with the insurance broker. He joined the board in 1984 and served as chairman from 1993 to 1997. He certainly lasted longer than 90 other Sedgwick employees who are to lose their jobs this year.

The redundancy announcement came yesterday as Sax Riley, the current chairman of Sedgwick, revealed the group's 1997 figures. As Mr Riley addressed the analysts' meeting yesterday morning, he said that he hoped the good figures from the group "would be a good omen for events in Trinidad this afternoon", referring, of course, to the last day of England's Test match against the West Indies.

The gathered analysts, however, could only recall how England's cricketers have

managed to grab defeat from the jaws of victory so many times before. You could practically hear a pin drop.

The Confederation of British Industry (CBI) has appointed Colin Perry as chairman of its Small and Medium Enterprise (SME) Council to replace Tony Bonner.

Mr Bonner will return to Mersycide to run his own business, Contracts Chemicals. Mr Perry is chief executive of LFE Scientific, a manufacturer of microbiological laboratory equipment with sales of £3m based near Oldham. In the past Mr Perry has worked for Reed International and has been chairman and chief executive of the Birmingham Mint Group.

Incidentally, did you know that Adrian Turner, head of the CBI, is a second cousin of Anthea Turner, the television presenter?

Speaking of Titans of Industry, Sir John Harvey-Jones has hit the headlines with his announcement that he now devotes 20 minutes a day to Transcendental Meditation (TM).

Sir John, the former chairman of ICI, The Economist and Grand Metropolitan, is still one of the country's best-known industrialists. As such he will visit a head-hunting firm, The Devonshire Group, tomorrow as it moves to new offices in the City. Part of the visit will involve Sir John in taking a psychometric test.

Such tests are used by companies to try to attract employees with the right character for the job, although how answering daft questions - such as, "Would you rather be a novelist or a clockmaker?" - helps in the process beats me.

A Californian-based drugs company has hired its second heavyweight Russian politician in a month. ICN Pharmaceuticals has recruited Sergei Gryzunov, Russia's former minister of press and information between 1994 and 1996, as vice president of public relations and communications for Europe.

Mr Gryzunov was also deputy editor-in-chief of the Novosti Russian News Agency, spending eight years in Yugoslavia as its chief correspondent. This follows the appointment of Andrei Kazyrev, former minister of foreign affairs, to ICN's board.

Milan Panic, chairman and chief executive officer of ICN, says the company is engaged on this hiring spree in order to become "the leading pharmaceutical company in Russia and Eastern Europe". It looks like it's well on the way, as it already employs more than 13,300 people in Eastern and Central Europe. Who next? Mikhail Gorbachev?



Bob Gavron (left) and Bob Phillips of Guardian Media

ALL is not well at the top of the Guardian Media Group. Rumour reaches me that Bob Phillips, newly appointed chief executive, has already locked horns with the extraordinary-looking Bob Gavron, founder of the St Ives printing group and GMG's chairman, or "Minister without Portfolio", as he has been dubbed by those who are at a loss to work out precisely what he does round there. Apparently, the chilled atmosphere is in part due to GMG's proposed link-up with the Dutch television production giant Endemol Entertainment. The two sides are setting up a television joint venture, chaired by Mr Phillips, that would take control of GMG's Broadcast Communications. But Mr Gavron is less than impressed by the deal, and has told Mr Phillips so. No doubt we will read about it all in *The Guardian's* media pages.

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Luca the gaffer all grins as he takes over

Chelsea's new Italian player-manager is clearly at ease with his recent elevation at Stamford Bridge. Glenn Moore reports

IF GIANLUCA VIALLI fills Ruud Gullit's role in the dug-out as successfully tonight as he took his place in the media spotlight yesterday Chelsea could be heading for Wembley.

Vialli, whose new charges must overturn Arsenal's 2-1 Coca-Cola Cup semi-final first leg lead at Stamford Bridge, matched Gullit's bravura display on Friday with a tour de force of his own at Chelsea's Heathrow training ground.

Despite having woken up, in only his fifth day in the job, to newspaper tales suggesting Chelsea were already lining up a replacement, Vialli was all smiles. Faced by a 10-strong media corps, featuring 11 TV crews and a large Italian presence, he showed an impressive command of the English language, cracking jokes, expounding his philosophy as a manager and a person, and skilfully evading some well-laid traps. Ruud Gullit, he insisted, had not been "stabbed in the back", he could look at himself "in the mirror" and he was promising change but not "revolution".

Vialli was also given glowing testimonies by Mark Hughes and Dennis Wise but elsewhere it was business as usual as Ken Bates, the chairman, added to his criticism of Gullit.

Vialli had arrived at training to find it under seige, half-term having coincided with his first public press conference. He then suffered his first defeat as manager as a team featuring what appeared to be the first-choice attack, including himself, Hughes and Gianfranco Zola, lost 4-0 to the defence.

Much preening later Vialli, in pin-stripe shirt, dark blazer and silk tie, faced the press and quickly revealed the highly visual nature of his grasp of English.

"This it is a very difficult and exciting position," he said. "I will have to be like a sponge and absorb as much as possible."

Vialli, not surprisingly given the alleged breakdown in manager-player relations under Gullit, was quizzed on his new relationship with his team-mates.

"Before I was a team-mate, a friend. Now I will have to make decisions and upset them. I want to be honest with them, open, blunt if necessary. Players want to know why and I will explain my decisions. They might not understand, they might think I'm wrong, but I want my conscience clear and I hope they will respect my decision. You need players who want to do the job for you. They have to care about you."

Judging by Wise's testimony they do. "He's a wonderful man, I like him as a person and am looking forward to helping him. He still messes about and enjoys a joke with us. We still call him Luca, when I called him Gaffer he started laughing." Wise agreed that Vialli's popularity made the decision to sack Gullit, which stunned the players, easier to accept. "We liked Ruud, we like Luca. It is the club's decision, the players just have to accept it. They haven't explained it to us but clubs never do."

Vialli added: "The players are intelligent enough to understand it is a team game, not a game for single minds. If they are dropped I hope they keep going and try to make me change my mind. I might do if I see the players work very hard in training and have the right spirit. If you are playing everything is easy, you are happy and confident. When you don't play you must be mature and help your teammates to perform. If you can do that you are even better than the top scorer of the club."



Chelsea's new manager Gianluca Vialli makes a point as he directs a training session at Heathrow yesterday

Photograph: Peter Jay

Vialli was the perfect example of that, as Hughes recalled: "I was impressed with the dignity with which he dealt with being out of the side. I sit next to him in the dressing-room and before every game he would wish me luck and you knew he genuinely meant it." Hughes expects to continue being in and out of the side and added: "At this stage of a career you have to accept not playing every week."

Vialli said he did not know if he would rotate his strikers but added: "I hope the team will play so well that I can play the same team on Saturday and the following games." This rather supports the belief he will play himself, Hughes and Zola in attack which is not good news for Tore Andre Flo.

"He's been very honest and fair," Wise said, "he's probably a little nervous at the moment."

He's had the board out and told us how he wants us to play. He wants us to work hard and be disciplined, to train as we play. He is a perfectionist, you can see it in the way he dresses."

Hughes added: "Most of us thought he'd become a coach. He did not mention it but he has a presence. I'm looking forward to working with him. He's passionate about the game and he played in Italy where they have a different attitude, where the emphasis is on stopping teams playing."

"I will start from where Rudi left off," Vialli said. "I will not be making revolution, that would be stupid, we are only in February and in a good position in the Premiership, the Coca-Cola Cup and in Europe."

Vialli did not see Arsenal play Crystal Palace on Sunday, except on television, as he was still un-

derstanding a personal meeting with every member of Chelsea's 30-strong professional staff.

He cited Juventus, with whom he won the European Champions' Cup, as his model and believed himself influenced by all his managers, Marcello Lippi, Valeri Boskov, Azeglio Vicini, Arrigo Sacchi (who dropped him from the Italy side), Giovanni Trapattoni and Gullit. In England, he particularly admired Alex Ferguson, Arsene Wenger and Gordon Strachan.

The Brian Laudrup transfer is, he said, on hold while he concentrates on this season. As for suggestions that he conspired against Gullit when meeting Laudrup on the eve of the Dutchman's dismissal, he said: "I respond to my own conscience, at the end of the day you have to look in the mirror and you know if you have done

something wrong. It is the way you behave day-to-day which shows people if you are a backstabber or not. No one stabbed Rudi in the back, not the staff or the players, this decision has come from the board."

One possible avenue closed for Gullit yesterday when Feyenoord, the club he supported and played for, extended Leo Beenhakker's contract as coach. Not that Chelsea have forgotten him. Speaking on Chelsea Clubcal Ken Bates, the chairman, said he was "disappointed" with the club's performance this season. "With the squad we have we should be in the FA Cup instead of Manchester United, maybe five points ahead of them instead of behind in the league, and I'm not too happy we're a goal down against Arsenal."

"I think towards the end he

[Gullit] got a very aggressive commercial manager who was lining up all these jobs. What with that and him getting his Dutch coaching badge, one had to ask where his priorities lay."

Vialli suggested Gullit and Graham Rix were back on good terms after mutually critical comments in the Sunday papers although his subsequent comment that it was the media's fault, in Rix's case, for allegedly paying him for the article, caused a few laughs, given Vialli's £80,000-plus deal with one paper last season.

He dismissed the reports of his own imminent demise. "I've played football for 17 years and I know some funny stories come up, this is part of the job. I know you can be sacked but I think Chelsea is not thinking about a new manager at the moment."

Beardsley enters as Clark faces exit

By Alan Nixon

FRANK CLARK faces the sack as Manchester City's manager in the next 24 hours, with Joe Royle lined up to replace him. Clark's tenure at Maine Road may be over tomorrow whether he wins, loses or draws against Ipswich tonight. It may even come to a head before, if a settlement figure can be reached.

The City chairman, Francis Lee, is under pressure to act as he fights for his own position, with sacking Clark his only solution. Clark will not resign to help him out of the crisis.

Royle, out of work for almost a year, will be approached and asked to take charge for the rest of the season. He is likely to want the services of Willie Donachie, his former Everton assistant who is currently coach at Sheffield United.

Clark signed Peter Beardsley yesterday, and launched a broadside at the board. Clark was angry that he had not been told about a club statement issued overnight which was effectively an ultimatum.

"I didn't know it was being made and I haven't seen it or read it," Clark said. "It would have been nice if someone had mentioned it to me."

Beardsley, out in the cold for weeks at Bolton after joining the club in August for £500,000, has moved on a month's loan and will make his debut tonight.

Wolves have denied that they made an illegal approach last year to a schoolboy attached to another club. They were one of five clubs charged by the Football Association yesterday with trying to poach young players from other clubs.

Manchester United, Newcastle, Everton, Aston Villa and Wolves are alleged to have breached the FA's Programme of Excellence Regulations.

"We have submitted our response and vigorously deny the charge of an illegal approach to a 10-year-old player, formerly at Shrewsbury Town, in March 1997," Wolves managing director, John Richards, said.

The clubs have until tomorrow to answer the charges. Everton have been charged following a complaint from Wolves in connection with four players, while Villa are charged over alleged approaches to three West Brom players and one at Charlton.

Hull have complained about Newcastle trying to sign two of their players, while Manchester United have been charged over alleged bids for a player each from Crewe and Stockport.

Brendon Batson, the Professional Footballers' Association deputy chief executive, said stiff sanctions should be applied if clubs continued to break the rules. "The rules are there and everybody should abide by them," he said.

Wright needs knee surgery

By Bill Pierce

ARSENE WENGER has told Ian Wright to hold on to his hopes of making the World Cup, despite the torn cartilage which means the 34-year-old Arsenal striker will have an operation on his left knee today.

The Arsenal manager believes that modern advances in keyhole surgery will soon have Wright back, and he said yesterday: "It is not a big injury these days and Ian's age is not important. There is a small tear on an inside cartilage and really it is now considered a minor operation. He is naturally feeling a little bit down, but in three to four weeks he should be ready to play again."

Wenger faces the prospect of doing without nine first-choice players for tonight's Coca-Cola Cup semi-final second leg at Stamford Bridge, most notably Dennis Bergkamp, who has an ankle injury.

Crystal Palace could be fighting for a place in the UEFA Cup this summer, even if they are relegated. Palace, 18th in the Premiership, are the only English club to have expressed a desire to compete in the InterToto Cup, winning which provides an entry into the UEFA Cup.

Derby are to lodge a protest over Jamaica's decision to keep the striker, Deon Burton, for a friendly this weekend. Burton is wanted to play against Nigeria on Saturday, which rules him out of Derby's game at Old Trafford.

The new Stoke City manager, Chris Kamara, has made Kyle Lyingbourne his first signing, paying Coventry £500,000 for the 29-year-old forward.

£30m of talent available free

By Mark Bradley

CLUBS will receive details over the next month of more than 500 players available on free transfers this summer due to the Bosman ruling - which could lead to the gulf between the salaries of Premiership and Football League professionals growing wider than ever.

The Premier League is circulating a list of around 75 players over the age of 24 who, despite being worth a combined total of more than £30m, will be out of contract in June and available for nothing.

They include leading players such as the Aston Villa defender Steve Staunton, Leeds striker Rod Wallace, and goalkeepers Kasey Keller (Leicester) and Shaka Hislop (Newcastle).

Others are established veterans, such as Bolton's Peter Beardsley, Tottenham's Gary Mabbutt

and even the former Chelsea player-manager Ruud Gullit.

Many are set to command massive signing-on fees and wages if they move on as their new clubs will save on paying out transfer fees of up to £3m which would have been required if they had still been under contract.

At the other end of the scale, the Football League will soon send out its own list of an estimated 450 players whose deals at lower League clubs also run out at the end of this season.

With 140 of them at First Division clubs - compared with only slightly higher numbers at Second and Third Divisions teams - some will certainly be in demand and will earn more than they could have done before the Bosman ruling on free movement of out-of-contract players.

Yet the vast majority will be in stiff competition for places at other clubs. Last season, before

the change in rules, just over half of the 299 players at the end of their contracts were not re-engaged by professional clubs.

The lack of a transfer fee will no doubt make them more appealing to clubs, but the fear remains that most players will reap an even smaller fraction of the rewards that their Premiership counterparts receive.

Clubs will always want to hang on to their best players on long-term deals, but those renegotiating contracts with less crucial squad members could show them the list of 450 potential replacements and argue there is no reason to pay them so much.

"Clubs can realise just how many players are available on free transfers and we hope they will not be tempted to sign a lot of players on lucrative contracts that will put themselves in financial jeopardy," a Football League spokesman said.

Tyke tiro ruled out of replay

CHRIS MORGAN, Barnsley's defensive hero in the draw at Old Trafford on Sunday, is out of his side's FA Cup fifth round replay against Manchester United due to his third ban of the season.

Morgan has been outstanding since breaking into the Tykes' first team a month ago and proved inspirational at the heart of the defence in the 1-1 draw at Old Trafford.

However, Morgan, who turned 20 on Friday and then made only his fifth appearance for Danny Wilson's side 48 hours later, has been collecting yellow cards in the reserves.

Morgan's suspension means he will be sidelined for Saturday's trip to Coventry in the Premiership and the return match with Alex Ferguson's side at Oakwell next Wednesday.

Smith welcomes Advocaat

By Ken Gaunt and Simon Buckland

WALTER SMITH yesterday sent his best wishes to Dick Advocaat, the man who will succeed him in the manager's chair at Ibrox on 1 July.

Smith is stepping down from the Rangers hot seat at the end of the season, although he may remain in another position.

Advocaat's decision to leave PSV Eindhoven in May was confirmed on Monday and Smith has warmed to the appointment: "He has a lot of respect in European coaching circles," Smith said. "He has the reputation of being an extremely good organiser of players in a technical sense."

"He is coming to a great club. Maybe I am a bit biased, but why not, because I have been a Rangers supporter all my life. The set-up under David

Murray at Ibrox is incredible. Everything is in place and I hope Dick can take us a stage further in our progress."

Celtic could thank their goalkeeper Jonathan Gould for their continued progress in the Tennents Scottish Cup on Monday night. In the 2-1 victory at Dunfermline Gould produced a contender for save of the season.

In front of the watching Scotland manager Craig Brown, Gould's heroics mean he is now in firm contention for a B international place against his father's team, Wales, on 24 March in Cwmbran.

Plucked from reserve team football at Bradford City for a nominal fee, Gould has established himself as first choice at Parkhead and been awarded a long-term deal.

His crucial save at East End Park came with the score 0-0 on the half-hour. Stewart Petrie's

cross from the right picked out Andy Todd for a free header and the defender's powerful connection sent the ball goalwards at pace.

"It was the first thing I had to do all match," Gould said. "I just tried to make sure I got across from the near post back to cover the header and just managed to get my feet to it."

The instinctive stop was virtually the last moment of action for Gould with Stéphane Mahé and Harald Brattbakk putting Celtic 2-0 up in the second-half.

But for Gould, who kept a clean sheet throughout Celtic's march to the Coca-Cola Cup, there was a late blow as David Bingham scored to make it 2-1. "When we were going off at the end, Tom Boyd reminded me that was the first Cup goal we have conceded this season, which was nice of him to point out," Gould said.

Today's fixtures

Football	7.30 unless stated
Coca-Cola Cup Semi-finals Second Leg	
Chelsea (1) v Arsenal (2) (7.45)	
Midlands (1) v Liverpool (2) (8.05)	
FA Cup League Cup Second-round replay: Rotherham v Gillingham (7.45)	
Nationwide Football League First Division	
Manchester City v Ipswich (7.45)	
Wolves v Bradford City (7.45)	
Tenants Scottish Cup Fourth-round replay: Bradford Park Avenue v Droydsden	
INVERNESS CT v Dundee Utd (7.45)	
GM Vauxhall Conference	
Preston v Slough (7.45)	
ON MARTENS LEAGUE Premier Division	
St Albans v King's Lynn (7.45)	
RYMAN LEAGUE First Division: Croxall v Wyke (7.45); Macclesfield v Bognor Regis (7.45); Full Members' Cup third round: Leyton Penant v Yeading	
UNIBOND LEAGUE Unibond First Division	
Cardiff v Cardiff City (7.45); Bradford Park Avenue v Droydsden	
ABNOTT INSURANCE NORTHERN LEAGUE First Division: Bellingham v Dunston FB; Salford City v Salford City; Crook v Consett; Durham v Jarrow; Seaham v Northfleet	
INTERLINK EXPRESS MIDLAND ALLIANCE: Sharnford v Rastall	
JEANSON EASTERN LEAGUE Premier Division: Farnborough v Tipton (7.45)	
NORTHERN COUNTRIES EAST LEAGUE Premier Division: Brigg v Selby; Sheffield v Pontefract	
UNILET SUSSEX COUNTY LEAGUE First Division: Eastbourne Town v Burgess Hill Town	
WINSTONLEAD KENT LEAGUE First Division: Canterbury v Folkestone (7.45)	

Weekend fixtures and pools guide

FA Cup League Cup	Third Division
1 Arsenal v Crystal Palace	33 Cardiff v Cambridge Utd
2 Bolton v West Ham	34 Chester v Rotherham
3 Coventry v Barnsley	35 Doncaster v Torquay
4 Leicester v Chelsea	36 Exeter v Colchester
5 Liverpool v Everton	37 Hull v Southport
6 Newcastle Utd v Derby	38 Leyton Orient v Swindon
7 Sheffield Wed v Tottenham	39 Luton City v Barnet
8 Southampton v Blackburn	40 Luton City v Barnet
9 Wrexham v Aston Villa	41 Luton City v Barnet
10 Postponed: Liverpool v Everton (playing Monday, Pools partial will be affected)	42 Luton City v Barnet
11 Postponed: Liverpool v Everton (playing Monday, Pools partial will be affected)	43 Luton City v Barnet
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AROUND THE RESORTS

Resort	Comment	Area	Last	Low	Up	Forecast
ANDORRA						
Soldeu/Tarter	Reasonable snow on upper runs	95%	3.2	40	80	Cloudy/mild
AUSTRIA						
Kaprun	Firm snow am, but slushy pm	90%	29.1	10	80	Changeable
BULGARIA						
Pamporovo	Wet snow conditions	100%	5.2	80	140	Snow showers
CANADA						
Whistler	Powdery snow on surface	100%	17.2	135	225	Partly cloudy
FRANCE						
Avoriaz	Reasonable above mid-station	95%	21.1	20	140	Mostly sunny
ITALY						
Folgosa	Conditions deteriorating	100%	19.1	30	60	Spring weather
NORWAY						
Hemsedal	Packed/groomed conditions	90%	16.2	70	70	Cloudy
SWITZERLAND						
Formentor	Spring-like skiing	100%	3.2	40	90	Sunny and mild
UNITED STATES						
St Moritz	Good on upper mountain	100%	21.1	60	100	Sunny
Aspen	Fresh snow cover at all levels	100%	16.2	95	135	Snow showers

Snow Reports supplied by Ski Hotline

Calls to 0891 numbers cost 50p/min; to 08975 numbers £1/min at all times. Helpline 0990 133 345

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